Literary House Creative Writing Worksheet

March 25, 2000

The O'Neill Literary House

Washington College
Chestertown, Maryland

Sophie Kerr Literary Festival Schedule

Friday, March 24

2 - 3:30 Students arrive at Admissions Office

4:00 William Kennedy Reading at Norman James Theater

6:00 Dinner at Hynson-Ringgold House

7:30 Students and their hosts join for evening activities

Saturday, March 25

8:30 Breakfast at the Literary House

9:00 Creative Writing Workshop (Robert Mooney/Literary House)
Open Conversation with Parents (Richard and Barbara Gillin)
[Parents should meet in the Literary House]

12:00 Lunch at the Literary House

1:00 Printing Workshop (Mike Kaylor/Literary House Press Room)

"With a novelist, like a surgeon, you have to get a feeling that you've fallen into good hands--someone for whom you can accept the anesthetic with confidence.
--Saul Bellow

I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library.
--Jorge Luis Borges

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“Writers aren’t exactly people...they’re a whole lot of people trying to be one person.” --F. Scott Fitzgerald

Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. --Percy Bysshe Shelley

A Cold Winter

It comes when you least expect it
Like a creature
In the blanketing darkness

It will crawl into your soul
And fill you with terror
To which an onlooker can
Read within the depths of your eyes
And feel your misery and pain
With nothing to hold onto but a prayer
And a sweaty palm

You will know what being scared and alone
Really means
When it enters your body
Doing all it can to steal your last
Breath of life
The one precious possession that you
Desperately try to cling to

But in the end
Your cold winter will come
To destroy any signs of your summer
And spring
The warmth of your heart
Turned ice
Like a lake in December
The leaves of your tree
Lying dead or dying
Just as you lay in your bed
Weak and feeble
The fateful snow storm coming soon

Finally,
It will sweep over you
Your body turned cold and numb
Your eyes never to see the
Light of day
Again
Your fingers never to feel the touch of
Your own love
Again
Your snow will fall
And you will surrender

To an eternal darkness

You can not avoid it
You can not hide
You can not win every battle
Because
The man
All dressed in black
Carrying the ice and wind beneath
His cloak
A dark evil smile
With glistening black eyes
And wicked demeanor
Will come
He will enter your room
And you shall breathe your last
Breath
Death comes to us all

- Serena Ahne

Time

I often think about the past,
and wonder why time goes so fast.

I usually thought that time went so slow,
but now I ask, where did time go.

I remember all the good times I had,
some are happy and others are sad.

I wish I could change the mistakes that I've made,
and I wish that my old past had always stayed.

But from my mistakes, lessons I've learned,
and now I cherish the new life I've earned.

This is a message from me to you,
life is precious and time is too.

Published in Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans 1996 Edition

Justin Armetta

A Jimmy Stein Trademark Migraine

Derek Bayne

"Paralysis" had been, when he passed over it countless times in his studies, just a word, like the other terminology that ran through his brain daily, one in a series that made the text longer, the assignment even more foreboding. "Stroke," another word that, in his short, now ended pre-med career, passed under his eyes in the same fashion as "dream," and "possibility," but had now suddenly grown a prominence that made his numb legs tingle in acceptance. At least, after the final diagnosis, he still had her, his fiancée, Michelle, there for him, to walk along side him as he rolled through life in a new companion, his wheelchair.

Jimmy Stein awoke in his now familiar hospital room, the florescent lights yet to be turned on. He appreciated, despite his constant complaining and avoidance of her eyes in shame of his reliance on her, the little things his morning nurse, a chubby woman in her earlier forties with a fetish for his sense of humor, did for his comfort, like leaving the light off and holding his breakfast until he awoke, even if it was late in the day.

Michelle would visit him every day, and every day she appeared just as magical as she did in his dreams, where the last remnants of their intimacy existed permanently in memories of her and desires to have feeling in his crotch. She was his last link to his past, and his only asset for the future, to accompany the medical bills and half completed doctrine that he would now never finish.

However, he had noticed, no matter how much he lied to himself about it, a change in Michelle in the few days after the diagnosis. She seemed, as much as he depended on and loved and cherished her, more and more detached, seemingly trying to separate herself from his world. Her attempt did not go unnoticed, however, and Jimmy began to wonder just where her mind was running to when she could no longer look him in the eye, why her response was a shameful giggle to his statement of, "Wait'll I get outta here."

Frustration began to accompany her visits, as he could see her fading away from him, a gradual slipping that he wanted to stop somehow. That afternoon, as she came in teasing him with a tight black tee shirt that left her navel exposed, loose cargo pants that betrayed her figure, and her hair up, the way he had always preferred it, he called her over to kiss him. She, standing across the room smiling, looked over to him, sitting in his wheelchair facing the window. It reminded him of their first days together, when he would go to kiss her and be given the same innocent smirk through then untouched lips.

"Uh, what? Hey, I brought you that cigarette you asked for." It was the same exact smirk, but the giggling and staring at the floor in avoidance of his eyes now had a different meaning. He could remember the first time they kissed: he was a little older, and she nervously avoided his mouth, justifying her fear of him with "I'm no good at this."

" 'Come here,' I said. I want to kiss you."

She looked down again, at her feet, not at him, and mumbled something unintelligible that broke down the dam in Jimmy's mind, and the thoughts restlessly wading in his head all week were free to run loose.

"Michelle, what's been with you lately?"

"What do you mean?"

"I just wanted to kiss you, for god's sake. Why didn't you let me? Why can't you even look at me the last few days?"

"I've been thinking, that's all."

"What about?"

"They told me, you know."

Had he not known where the conversation was headed, he would have asked for her to help him into bed, for he couldn't stand the awkwardness of the chair. The effort required to do something as simple as turn around disgusted him, a reminder of how dependent he had become, the independence he had lost. "Told you what?"

"They; Dr. Cantrell, he says you might be paralyzed for life."

He tried to uncross his legs, but stopped when he realized they weren't crossed. The constant sensation that they were annoyed him. "I know, they told me the same thing. What, did you think they'd keep that from me?"

"No, but … oh man. We need to talk. I wanted, I…."

"What?"

"I want to have kids. I want to have a family, to be a mother." As Jimmy looked up at her, he felt like a child being scolded by his mother, through repressed anger and with a gentle voice, "If you can't…. How are we supposed to have kids?"

She was standing even farther from him then when the conversation had begun. He couldn't remember her moving.

"I can't marry you. I've tried so hard to cope with this, with the way we would be, I…."

She always did hold back from him, from the first "I love you" to admitting that she was thinking about him as she was in bed at night waiting to fall asleep. Views into her thoughts had been limited, except when fatigue or alcohol loosened her pride's hold and he would be told the great secrets that a sober Michelle would be ashamed to say, and often was ashamed to have said as she learned of her actions the following morning.

"Jesus, Michelle. Just say it."

"I just did. I can't deal."

The words flowed into him, his mind slowly processing them and trying to keep him from seeing the real truth in her words. A thousand thoughts cried out and died in his head, he could see them in the mass grave their holocaust had left them in. His mind became a blank slate, waiting for some stimulation to spark a coherent thought.

Jimmy began to shake, his conscious lost in a ball of anger and pain that he didn't have the time, or the energy, to unravel.

For the first time in weeks he accepted what his instincts told him, and put his emotions into words, opening the curtains while he changed, letting the whole world see his frail, crippled naked body.

"Get out, Michelle." He looked down at his lap as he said it.

"What!?"

"Get out."

He saw his words rip into her, and her look of inferiority and gentle defiance quickly turned to one of anger, directed at its owner more so than Jimmy.

"Fine! Goddamn it, Jimmy, you know how hard I tried for you?"

"Just get out."

"How many hours I spent convincing myself that I could stay with you and…."

"Get out!"

"…That we could be together, that we could have kids, that there were ways, that I didn't need sex in my life? Do you know how long I've thought about this?"

"Get out. Get out, Michelle."

"Alright." She must have had accepted his decision, as he had had to accept hers. "I just want you to know what you've meant to me."

"Michelle."

"You owned me, you know. I don't let guys own me, but you did. I just want you to know that, how important you were—are—to me. I don't think I've ever let you realize that."

"Leave, Michelle. Please." The words choked him, his throat, constricted enough already, fighting back tears, had to now sever its ties to the world, to burn down the church to her that Jimmy had constructed so long ago.

The desire to look up at her, to see her one last time, was great, but he knew how easily pain could be magnified and so he didn't. Footsteps rushed, be it out of anger or shame he wasn't sure, to the chair containing Michelle's coat, then to the door. The swishing of her clothes, the rattling of keys in her pocket, the patter of her shoelaces hitting the tile floor, the commotion that her movement created in his tranquil room, stopped as he felt her looking at him. Perhaps she knew this was the end, and their last moment together was too rushed, too forced, so, he thought, she must have been reaching backward, retreating into the past one last time before the elevator. "I love you, Jimmy."

Again his brain stuttered, the constant streams of thought had long ago merged together into a madness that strained behind his eyes, a sudden depression that had turned into physical pain, a Jimmy Stein trademark migraine. The burned out building sitting in the wheelchair finally stopped smoldering, and a last puff of smoke arose out of its mouth and into the air, "Good bye, Michelle."

She never heard it.

That evening was particularly difficult, especially when the evening nurse asked, like she did every night in her attempt to be cordial, how Michelle was. It was too bad he didn't have work to bury himself in like he used to do, his father's death helping to power his term paper senior year, the same depression that locked him in his room for the funeral also cut off all contact with the world, helping him concentrate. He always joked it was dad finally getting him to do his schoolwork. Unfortunately, since he couldn't attend, at least until his therapy started, or afford college anymore, he had nothing to do but think. He wished he had had Michelle bring him his guitar. It was often his best friend, and its metallic, twangy words more comforting than the bible's or hers had ever been.

He could see her sitting in the chair that they had shared so many evenings in, her face red with tears and white zinfandel, her breath thick with sadness and her eyes betrayed and made ugly by the veins within them. He could also see the glass on the table, and the phone next to it

ringing. Calling her was a habit of his that, through living in the same home as her, he had fallen out of, and was recently brought back to by his blood clot, but one that he wished would leave him again, its temptations disintegrating along with his memories of her.

Hospital phones, the cheap, thin plastic rectangles that seemed to garble words as if the death in the building had seeped into the phone lines, always annoyed him, but his was suddenly the most beautiful thing in his suddenly empty world. It could take back all his words; it could take him to Michelle, to her beautiful voice that had a unique way of soothing him.

It rung with an obnoxious, mechanical beeping that cut at his nerves, making the moment even more tense as he waited for her to pick up. He would have to settle for the friendship that they had always promised would exist between them, a thought that, first as teens and then young adults, seemed all the better today, after he was forced to mature.

The beeping grabbed at his gut, making him instantly nauseated, and a simple, clear thought, the first one that evening, arose in him.

As he sat the phone down, the beeping was cut off as the receiver hit the table, and he smiled in acceptance. She was gone, his past with her, but the new life before him offered more than any forced, uncomfortable friendship would. Jimmy reached over to his tray table, and picked up the cigarette Michelle had brought him, finally giving the matches in the duffel bag next to him a purpose. He inhaled his first drag in months, the culprit of his destruction was held in his lungs, making them just a little darker. Jimmy exhaled and watched as the marriage and doctrine and family began to materialize in the smoke floating before his eyes, but every time he thought he saw something, it would fade away, forever lost in the mass of bright, sterilized breaths that encompassed him.

A Cry in the Night
Kristin K. Beane

To you my dear, I write you this poem,
Hoping one day, we will both know him.
From the darkness of his eyes,
To all the children's cries,
We'll know how he feels,
About all the ordeals.

Silently now, I'll tell you this prayer,
Hoping someday that he will care.
I close my eyes to take a rest,
Getting all thoughts off of my chest.
Do you hear the cries in the night,
Of a child, on a long flight?

He blessed me when I didn't want blessed,
One day, I'll let it come back, and it will be my best.
Until the day I can handle this,
I don't want to put up with this mess.
Take it back 'cause its not mine,
When it is, I'll love it until the end of time.

WHO IS MAN, IF THOU ARE NOT MINDFUL OF HIM?

Joseph Brooks

As the old man grew older still, he looked back at a life of mis-guidance and of times lost. As he turned to the future, he saw a certain end. It was at this time he began to ask himself a question that had begun in the past when he was young and full of arrogance and questions that he had to answer himself. Others had tried, to no avail, and left in bitter disgust because they felt as if they were talking to themselves or to *the wall* (when indeed they were). He was determined to answer them all. The questions now; *What is man and who have I become?* As he listened to the metronome of time tick away, his mouth sputtered, " I am a creature of self-questionnaire."

The now elderly one pondered and referred once again to past experience and personal bias. As he remembered, he thought of all of the love he had encountered and bestowed upon others and then of all of the spite and hatred he endured and supplied. He thought of all of the times that he felt joy and anger. He stood in the midst of the cliffs of emotion, while words formed as he remarked, "Indeed I am a creature of emotion."

As the waters of time drifted now slowly but surely, he thought of all of his accomplishments. He had raised four children well, even though one went astray. He had been faithful to what he believed, or what he thought he did, and was faithful to his wife now of fifty years. The monetary aspect never failed him, either. However, as he pondered his accomplishments he couldn't ignore his failures. The greatest vestige of all was that he, indeed, did blame himself for his eldest child's death. He must have felt that he had done something wrong while raising her. In reality, it wasn't his fault. As he sat in judgment at his own trial, his only defense was, "Indeed I am a creature of imperfection, and self-prosecution."

Then, he thought of the society that he was apart of. He had witnessed many of its movements fluctuate again and again. He watched his wife age and watched his children and their children mature. He watched seasons set and decades decease. A thought occurred to him, everything changes and yet remains the same. As he lay beneath the tree of change that branched off in so many directions he thought, "Indeed I am a creature of steady yet uncertain change."

He then went to answer this question which had taken eighty years to solve, "Who am I?" The time ripened face looked perplexed and still

troubled. Why couldn't he answer this question, even with a lifetime of experiences? He was bitterly confused as a north wind began to howl and chill him.

After the wind calmed, he felt as if he were freed from his chains that had become old and rusted. Looking though a window that wouldn't open, whose shutters wouldn't close, he saw his past, realized his future and finally, knew *what is man.* Now, he had a feeling of great knowledge and was mindful of who he was and is. Hindsight had shown him his relevance. Like an explorer, he sailed a sea of knowledge, fell off a cliff of emotion and prevailed to return to climb it a again.

The jury finally returned. He, as the judge, prosecutor, defendant and jury waited to hear the verdict. As he waited beneath that ever-expansive tree he said to himself proudly, "I am man, the great explorer who returned from the most dangerous, yet rewarding expedition. LIFE." He laughed, in spite of himself, "Life is man's own way of explaining himself."

Note to reader: *I, being too young at the age of 17, was not properly able to define man, so I lived vicariously though another man. Having imagination is definitely a valued part of being oneself, a man.*

We'd walked all night
on the beach's sandy shores,
and I hugged her the tighter
as we passed the boardwalk whores.

The beach was full of shells
the curls had gathered in,
and the sandy hills, themselves,
full of dips and knells.

We walked over ashes
of cigarette butts,
but I paid them no attention
and kissed her lashes.

The moon shone above
and the warm coastal breezes
tickled us, enveloped us,
and teased us.

The lights of heaven
sought my face and hers
and I blocked out the sirens
and heard the sea's silky purrs.

We lay on the sand,
looking skyward, looking up,
and as I felt for her hand
came warm silence, abrupt.

A perfect end to a summer night,
warm wind, sea and air, sweet...
We fell asleep with lukewarm waters
swaddling our feet.

Eliot Caroom

Margaret Chadbourn
7601 Elba Road
Alexandria, VA 22306

Ocean Echoes

Ocean bound
With turning tides
Waves of music
Mermaid cries

Whale song echoes
Seagull calls
Deep blue waters
Coral halls

Echoed softly
Time forgot
Song of Seas
Ancients sought

Silvered fish
Dolphins leap
Crystal seafoam
Timeless keep

Flowing softly
Passive thought
Sea's deep calling
Forgotten not

Calling all angels,
I could really use your help.
You see, I think I'm losing myself,
And I don't know what to do.

Yesterday, I went to fly a kite,
But it just flew away.
Where it's gone, I'll never know,
Perhaps it will return.

Today, I went to read the news,
But the newspaper was blank.
I know that it was no mistake,
My neighbor's was the same.

Calling all angels,
We could really use your help.
You see, we think we're losing ourselves,
And we don't know what to do.

On Sunday, we all prayed to God,
But nobody was home.
We banged the door, and rang the bell,
Perhaps he's out to lunch.

Today, we all went to the park,
To take a nice long walk.
But all the grass had died away,
And the ponds had all dried up.

Calling all angels,
I could really use your help.
You see, I think that we have lost ourselves,
And we don't know what to do.

Colleen Costello

Baton Rouge Rhythms
& New Orleans French
Quarter simplistic
style, that smooth
swift sound of horns
& trumpets & guitars
in those Oh so Spanish
flamenco add-ons, speeding
round all those bars and dance halls.

Little, lithe, luminescent
women walking away
from waiting arms of wolves,
the men with eyes only
for anything with an hourglass
figure that can shake her booty
to those jazz tunes
that have Dixieland diversions
inset into the instruments.

Andrew Cowles

UnDEr Construction — Lou DiBenedetto

Appetizer: The abbreviated tease, a foreshadowing of what is to come.
We eat with stained hands,
shoveling artificial nutrition into tenements of anatomy.
We wear difficult smiles, each curvature forced.
Silence washed down with a thick syrup.

Entrée: We regurgitate the activities that sequester us daily.
Eating with clanging silverware,
the hissing friction of culinary tools.
We take of each other, colliding tectonics.
Served with the lips of mute resentment, falling on deaf ears.
Food depleted by grinding teeth, cavities losing their shallow character.
We chew on crumbs of the past, reduced in our memories.
She tries feeding an impossible hunger.

Four placemats set, three occupied
One tenant's food, piled over disintegrating pills,
directions reading, "take with food."
One tenant's food crowding the same cavern as so many secrets,
carefully avoiding their displacement.
The final tenant, ravenous in his rhythm,
cutting his food in harmony with his chewing.
Rapid to end his detached presence.

Slicing meat, removing bones and pits.
We massage each other with distrust, sorrow and distortion,
each atlas receiving a different magnitude of pressure.

With droughts in our mouths,
we drink the bitter sap of our restless consistencies,
easing excruciating throats
with a nectar of despair and digression.

Dessert: A hedonistic additive, served only to irritate our wounds.
Showering our health with harmful substances.
A tortured housewife's long term attempt at revenge?
Stuffing the dissidents loins with corrosive pastries,
clogging the network of the body.
The climax to a turbulent meal.

The Dishes: We fill the sink with porcelain remains,
polished clean with unsatisfied tongues.
We retire to private niches, emotions smothered.
Soap and water, the detergent of our leftovers.
Scrubbing hands attempt to loosen the stains,
lifting them from plates,
but cementing them in the memory

It was time to move. There were now seven of us living in a small two bedroom house. Of course it wasn't always this way, at one time this house was a perfect fit, but now my family was larger . We had found a new house, much larger and much nicer than our old one. Still, that didn't make the packing any easier. I remember my brother and I crying the night before we left. We knew we were moving on to something better, but the change was hard for us. We'd grown attached to the old house.

A healthy ministry is always experiencing growth. Finding direction during a period of growth can be difficult though. It may require us to adopt a new approach, or "move" out of something that no longer meets the needs of the people we minister to. This art of letting go is a challenge. When we get comfortable with something, whether it be a place, a routine, or a ministry, there is always part of us that longs for things to stay the same.

The apostles in Acts chapter 6 also faced a dilemma with growth. Their numbers were increasing and they were busy preaching and instructing people in the word of God. The believers needed a group to oversee the distribution of food. The disciples were unable to help wait on tables because of their responsiblity to preach and instruct, so they appointed seven men who were filled with th Holy Spirit to manage this. It's possible that some of the believers were not happy with this decision. They may have thought the disciples had a "holier than thou" attitude for being unwilling to wait on tables. God was obviously pleased with the decision though, because in verse 7 it goes on to say "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jeruselum inreased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."

The "Mane Event," our youth outreach event, has provided us with plenty of growth. Anyone who has seen the color of Dave's hair knows that we had over 150 Jr. and Sr. Highers gathered that night, but the most important part were the 15-20 decisions made for Jesus Christ.

Growth like this is exciting, but it brings with it new needs for our youth group to meet. The "Mane Event," generated alot of interest, and the numbers that attend weekly youth group have swelled. Many of them are new to the Christian faith. The youth ministry team is debating how best to meet their needs and what direction our program should take. We may have to make some changes, but what a wonderful problem to have.

Southwood Messenger November 1999

—Jared Eastlack

Stephanie Gerhold
17324 Lafayette Dr.
Olney, MD 20832

In With the Breeze

I always saw him around town, but I never knew his name. It was probably better that way. I could see the adversity in his face. When he passed in the street, I could only stare at his petite lean frame striding determinedly. Though he stood just a few inches above five feet, he still emanated intimidation. At first I feared him, but his cross features transformed when we were alone like soft, delicate petals hidden below the rose's wilting outer shell. He left me in the most dangerous position of all: comfort. More fairy than man, he gave me a nervous virus that always left me spiritually enervated. I felt he could take flight at any moment. I should have realized that one day he would.

Muscles defined his gaunt body from the numerous meals he never ate. What little money he had from typical con-man antics went toward alcohol and drugs to drown his loneliness and numb his emotions. His cheek bones protruded and his nose jutted out like a cartoon character's, giving him a comical appearance. I could not laugh. His features were sharp to the untrained observer's eye. But upon closer inspection, I could see the places where tears and sorrow had begun to erode, to soften the harsh lines. To smooth the forever frowning brow. To break down the man who posted a "No Trespassing" sign on the door to his world. Who would take and take from you till you could give no more, never letting you inside him long enough to make sense of the Rubix Cube mind at work. I should not have deceived myself, I should not have believed, but manipulation was always one of his more cultivated skills.

His eyes were deep brown. They became more and more muddied and inscrutable each day. Just when I thought I knew him, they would tell me otherwise. Sheltered by dark, unruly eyebrows constantly raised condescendingly, his eyes stayed mostly hidden, a stealth silent observer. They were so small compared to the rest of his facial features and deeply sunken. Dark circles had materialized to permanence from lack of sleep, bed-hopping, from living his life one day at a time, from dreaming all day and night that there would be a change. And early-on the wrinkles formed from running away, from maintaining the facade of indifference. But when I stared into those raccoon-like mirrors, no one will ever know the haunting pain I unearthed.

Words flowed musically from his lips like a song. Breathy at times, deeper on the sad notes, always leaving a lasting impression. That tiny melody that has a tendency to creep in the back of my mind, following me throughout the day. And, his lips. So tiny, that if I disregarded the rest of his body, I might have thought that I was talking to a mere child. So perfectly formed, always firmly fixed in his cynical expression. His mask to those around him, it covered all his dark secrets and shames.

He was beautiful.

He believed in nothing except his pages and pages of poems. He wrote on anything he found. A gum rapper, part of a pizza box, or a napkin served as his blank canvas. He sketched and he wrote; his portfolio—a compilation of years and years and pages and pages of emotions. Impulsively, he would sit in a random place and write when inspiration struck. Using his beautiful hands, he painted words denying his reality. When I matched my hand with his, my fingertips extended a bit farther from where his rested.

Such wonderful hands. Full of calluses, from the many hours of using his drawing pencils until they eventually rubbed off his skin. Full of scars and broken fingers from all of the fights he had started. From all of the times he provoked trouble.

I wish I could have told him what he did, but he blew in with the breeze and slipped away with the tide, vanishing without a trace, my innocence locked forever in his eyes.

Chance

caught up in a never ending game of chance I roll the dice one more time just as a curiosity does it come up light or dark the opposite color of the man both blue the questions in my mind have been here for some time how can I choose the two friends the three lovers the party the poem the one who can't decide I sit in the middle still rolling the dice still trying to decide they rotate around on spinning chairs watching waiting for the dice to be thrown waiting to see who wins the jackpot can't decide the dice run away the players turn around there is no more game to play

Emily Getman

Jennifer Gordon 5904 Lockwood rd. Cheverly Md. 20785

On G-d

G-d looked down on Moses and what did he say? He allowed Moses to look at his back side. This is the closest that any man has ever been to G-d, the most any man has ever seen. The rest is faith, plain and simple. So the simple son asks, "why should I believe in something that I cannot see." The wise son would then answer, "because there comes a time when you just have to believe in something." The wise, unquestioning son has been replaced by a generation of askers, and unfortunately Moses isn't present to tell his tales of his encounters of the first kind. So what's left for us to go on? Questions? Questions that for the most part have no certain answer, and those that do are questioned even further. After all the questions have been asked, then what? We are left in a state of limbo, riddled with sex and drugs, love and hate, right and wrong. Who writes the rules for such a generation? Certainly not the elders we constantly question, and certainly not Moses with his two stone slabs at hand. Only we can find the answers for ourselves. Only we can know why we do the things that we do, and why we ask the questions that we ask.

I wrote my Bat-Mitzvah speech on this very subject. At the time, a weekly regiment of Hebrew school, services, and chats with my Rabbi led me to focus more on why we should believe than why we should question what we believe. I read it nobly in front of those in attendance, some family, some friends, mostly those who were invited for cordial reasons. Belief overplays the importance of this story in the old testament. The story of G-d and Moses intrigues me. It is by far the most memorable and inspirational of the bible stories. After all, Moses was just a mortal, and he sinned just as any mortal would. No one truly knows why G-d chose Moses to reveal himself to over any other Israelite, or any other man. It might be argued that it was because Moses had already been chosen to lead his people out of Egypt. Why Moses and not any other man who had served his people? Moses was to G-d as any chosen student is to their teacher. G-d saw something in Moses that he liked, perhaps he had some outstanding quality G-d related to himself, or maybe Moses just had the best looking beard G-d had ever seen. G-d chose Moses because Moses stood out to him. Why we stand out to those around us cannot be defined. This translates into any social situation. Why does a boy fall in love with a particular girl? Why are two people best friends? We need, we crave to be something special, something outstanding to other people. It's why we beat ourselves up wondering why we aren't that special person. That's why we cherish the few times when we are. However Moses and G-d are an unusual case. Here lies the beauty of their relationship. They always kept their distance from one another, but at the same time they were always very close. G-d spoke to, and spoke through Moses, but they didn't see much of each other. This is not as common of an occurrence in society. This is what makes G-d and Moses stand out.

G-d and Moses also lay on different levels. G-d as the instructor, and Moses as the follower. Nevertheless there exists a certain level of commaraderie between the two. Moses was as close to a peer as flesh could be to a supreme being. They talked, they shared information and troubles, they worked together, and it is with G-d, not his fellow men, that Moses died . The two complemented each other. True, it was G-d that chose Moses, not the other way around, but the two were a unique pair. If G-d had never touched the life of Moses, much like his fellow men, his existence would be trivial, and unknown to us today. It is because of what G-d saw in Moses, that Moses became what he was. In each relationship, regardless of the nature, there exists a certain level of this. There are always situations when one member must guide the other. Through this guidance our character, our beliefs, and our strength is formed. We are in part what those who we let in shape us into. Moses; a leader to his people; our generation; overwhelmingly questioning.

We live our lives not knowing what will happen next. Will I get pregnant? Will I die alone? Will I get lost on the way to the supermarket? Moses experienced the extreme end of this...he was lost in the desert for forty years. It was the guidance of G-d that got him through. It is the guidance of those around us that will get us through. Relationships, friendships, love or hate, confused or clear, we are all people. We all interrelate, and at one point or another we will experience our own personal desert. As a generation with more questions than answers we must look at what we see, and interpret for ourselves the meaning. Moses saw G-d's back side, and to him, he saw inspiration to lead his people out of peril. We look at a preacher and a prayer book and wonder, "is this for me?" Some say yes, just as some say no. But we can all look at what we have, and learn for ourselves the answers that we crave. Regardless of how we think, or how we feel, we can all stand to learn a little bit from our friend Moses.

Courtney Hanson
3061 Centre Rd.
Riva, MD 21140

Woven Webs

Webs are woven with a sleepy heart,

But then the night awakens the soul.

Breath quickens, demons dance before the eyes.

Lightening flashes through the once tranquil conscience.

Devilish voices repeat in the ears unforgettable words.

Images float on the wind

Racing across the face blows a voice

Seething, "Yessss."

And a refection of a girl appears in the mirror and whispers,

"I'm sorry."

Brandy

She is the black crack baby
whose greasy hair
bats at her eyelashes,
whose lace skirt
clings to the top of her thigh,
and stiletto heels
crack the sidewalk
when she sways.
She is the black sheep baby
whose thighs
melt together like butter when she struts,
whose teacup tits
barely stretch the lame blouse,
and fading frame
shadows the sidewalk
as she slouches.
She is the black whore baby
whose wandering eyes
are lined in black paint,
whose pouty lips
are open for business,
and too close to reality
she stretches the sidewalk
and she fades.

Erin Hess

Kristen Hicks
AP English
April 12, 1999

A Blended Society

Today I took the time to look around,
Eyeing each tiny part of our world,
And I realized that we come,
From a blended society.

Everything we see is a mixture,
Of colors, tints, sizes, and textures,
Mixed together,
To form a blended society.

Each tiny droplet of water,
Blue, green, aqua, and purple,
Make up the beautiful sea,
Part of a blended society.

Each instrument,
Trumpet, flute, oboe, and clarinet,
Joining together to make up an orchestra,
Part of a blended society.

Each blade of grass,
Differently tinted greens and browns,
Become a large field,
Part of a blended society.

Each tiny snowflake,
When gathered and packed,
Form a child's snowman,
Part of a blended society.

Since before slave owners beat down their African brothers,
Since before Martin Luther King Jr. declared, "I have a dream!"
Since before the Nazis formed concentration camps,
We were a blended society.

And so people,
Black, white, Asian, and Hispanic,
Must join hands, voices and skills,
To become part of our blended society.

We must understand this,
If we wish to succeed,
All people are equals,
In a blended society.

We are but tiny drops of paint,
On the large canvas of the Earth,
Different and yet beautiful,
A blended society.

Christmas Time

By David Huzzard

christmas
husbus
b
r (un buy)
o
k
ea t
ree
(unrap gracious surprise
to return next day)
christmas over /happy\

David J. Huzzard
10630 Timberidge Rd.
Fairfax Station, VA 22039

Jonathan Illuzzi
4106 Virginia Ct.
Boothwyn, PA 19061
Extended Metaphor

A small wave emerges out of the depth of the horizon.
It rolls with the slightest breeze, rocking to and fro
until it settles again with the solitude of the clear, blue water.
It breathes, slowly, concisely, as if to warn any one in its path, that it is coming,
to swallow them with no remorse.
It waits, silently and inert, until its momentum can give way.
Suddenly, a thunderous roar explodes, and pierces the serenity of the inanimate wave.
This catalyst sends it tumbling down furiously into the now disturbed water, gaining speed with every timely moment.
The tossing, and turning, and flipping of the wave is recognized by all who are present to experience its wrath.
Its acceleration matures, and reaches the fine line between pessimism and optimism, pondering if it will come on top - to reach its goal of invincibility.
Finally, in all its glory and magnificence, the wave halts abruptly as a greater force sojourns its path.
It dies down then, and makes its way back into the phlegmatic nature from which it roused, waiting silently, for the next unfortunate soul to cross in its course.

CAGED

By Jessica Jacob

Huge gates block the entrance,
with rust covering the metal.
Just beyond the gates you see cobble stone walks,
all dusty and worn,
by the hustle of the people who pasted over them.
Large Stone walls stand tall and overpower me.
Guarding all that lie inside them.
Noises come from inside.
While an undetectable aroma spreads throughout the city.
Like a fog or mist,
the smell slowly climbs over fortifications,
and drifts through cracks in the walls,
carried by an uncontrollable, roving breeze.
The gates are opened at nine o'clock exactly,
with a whining creak, a whistle.
Children pour in to see what was there.
They stare in awe at the sight before their eyes.
All different animals spread out over the whole area.
Many animals were new to the children.
They wanted to learn all they could about the smelly animals,
that drew them there so early in the morning.
A tour begins.
Someone starts to tell the children all about the animals.
Explaining what made certain animals different from others,
and what was similar among them.
Each animal's area was different from the other.
The guide clarified the animals different needs.
Each caged area contained different animals.
All the animals were paired by twos,
Just like Noah and his ark.
There they remain locked up for eternity,
each animal and its mate.

Greta Jee
[redacted]
Marple Newtown High School

New Orleans Before Her

The lords of life, the lords of life,-
I saw them pass.
-Emerson

I am writing down the lines of her face
because her eyes are starting to forget.
I am thinking of how I know the sound of her keys
and the rhythm of her footsteps on the kitchen floor.

I am thinking only I can write this poem.

The sweater I found was hers.
She tells me where the stains are from.
She tells me how to make my own.

I am blowing the dust from the photograph,
New Orleans in the background.
Her skin is shinny with summer,
thinking only of her brow.

Before the times had changed,
before her children's crying,
before she left New Orleans,
before her winters came.

But then the winds grew silent,
and her life grew silent,
to make room for mine.

Learning of her spirit and all her desperate journeys.
I see pictures you can almost taste.
Like the smell of spirits on Bourbon Street.

I am noticing now, for the first time,
that our sophisticated hands are the same
sophisticated shape.
-grateful of this heirloom.

I am thanking you, my mother, for my spirit,
for my journeys, and for the lines of my face.
Which will some day be recorded
when my eyes start to forget.

William Jensen
16654 E.Ashbrook Dr.
Fountain Hills, Az, 85268

Grass Roots: "The essentials or the people who represent the essential needs or elements of a community."
-Dictionary of Cliche

GRASS ROOTS

by

William Jensen

The lawn mowers woke him up. The sound of loud motors running over the wet grass, through the morning mist. The strong, sharp blades cutting through the green leaves as the red machine was pushed along.

The Boy sat up in bed and looked out his window. The gardeners began in the backyard this time, two with lawn mowers and others bringing in sharp and rusty tools for bushes, trees and ivy. The Boy watched them for a while, their dark skin covered in denim and canvas. Some had on stained baseball caps with bent bills, others wore bandannas tied around their necks. They began to work, pulling weeds and trimming the hedges.

The Boy wrapped himself in his blankets, draped over his shoulders and around his waist. The sheets and bed spread were cool from the thin air that seeped into the house the night before. Another gardener started a lawn mower. The Boy made sure not to be seen. Who would

like a six year old spying on them? That is how he tried to justify his hiding, but in reality he was frightened by them. Not in the way he was afraid of the dark or movie monsters with fake fangs and claws, but in another way. When they talked he could not understand what they were saying, when they laughed he did not know why. Their hands were dirty. They had grass and mud under their fingernails, cuts and nicks on their palms and wrists and had a smell about them that reminded him of his father's under-shirts.

The Boy got out of bed. He wore his favorite Batman pajamas. He left his room and walked on the balls of his feet down the hall to his parent's room. Their door was left ajar, enough for him to peek through and see the foot of the bed but not enough for him to see if anyone was in it. He slowly pushed the door forward. He didn't want the door to creek loudly and wake anyone. No one was there. The sheets on the bed were rumpled and messy, turned over and untucked. A pillow lay on the floor, leaning against the bed. The Boy turned around and walked towards the kitchen. "Mom? Dad?"

No answer.

He heard sounds from the kitchen as he came closer. The big clock ticking, the refrigerator purring. No one was in the kitchen. A note was on the refrigerator. It was written with green ink on a yellow index card that was held in place by a dog shaped magnet. The words were bubbly, his mother's handwriting.

Hey Kido,

Your father is at work and I've gone garage sale hopping with Lisa Miller. Fix yourself some cereal, stay out of trouble and I'll be home one-ish. So, that will be when the short stick is on the one and the long stick is on the twelve.

Love,

Mom.

Lisa Miller. Mom's friend who always smelled like chicken soup, pinched his cheeks and told him how cute he was. He looked at the big ticking clock on the wall above the sliding glass door. The short stick was on the nine and the long stick was on the six.

He got out the cereal, the milk, a bowl and a spoon. He was careful pouring the milk. It almost always spilled when he did it, never when Mom did it. He stirred the cereal around in the milk with his spoon. The marshmallows turned the milk purple. He didn't care for the cereal, he preferred pancakes and waffles. Golden syrup slowly running over the edge like a slow, thick waterfall with melting butter resting on the top of the flapjack. Blueberries, apple and cinnamon, whole wheat and buttermilk. The good stuff!

When he turned his head he could look out the sliding glass door and see the gardeners. Pulling weeds, mowing the lawn, wiping the sweat of their brow with their forearms. One of the gardeners seemed to stick out. While the others kept their eyes on their work he had his eyes on everything else: the cars that went down the street, the birds and neighborhood cats sleeping in the shade. He was more of a heavy set then the rest. His belly looked soft and hugable, like the belly on Santa Claus. He had a mustache and stubble over his cheeks, chin and neck. He wore a baseball hat that had *Cutter's Gardeners* written on the front. He had grizzly bear arms. A grizzly gardener.

The Gardener was slumped over his lawn mower, his shoulders shaped like two mountains, pushing the machine back and forth across the grass. Even from inside the house the

Boy noticed that the grizzly gardener never blinked. The Boy found himself staring at him. The Gardener began to turn his head towards the Boy.

The Boy quickly refocused his attention to his cereal. Must have stared too long. Hope he didn't notice. When he looked up again the Gardener was out of his sight. The Boy finished his cereal, lifted the bowel to his mouth and slurped the milk down. He placed the bowl and spoon in the sink then went to his bedroom to change.

When he came outside, the gardeners were filling up the truck. As they came and went they never looked at him. The Boy began to walk down the street to see if any of the other kids were outside playing. Nobody was out but him and the gardeners. The grizzly gardener was leaning up against the truck, watching him. The Boy paid no attention. No one else was outside.

Where were the kids?

He knew where they were. They were inside, watching television; cartoons, sitcom re-runs, football, soccer and maybe if they were too lazy to change the channel, golf.

He came to where the street was cut off by a rushing perpendicular road cut it off. He looked behind him. No one had come out yet. There were only four houses between his and where the roads met. It looked like miles of endless sidewalk back home.

The front door of the house on the other side of the street opened. A boy? A girl? Another kid? The Boy's eyes came into focus on the body exiting the house.

"Hey you, kid!"

It was Joe Chever. The oldest kid on the street, a teenager. Joe walked towards the Boy. He was grinning. How old was Joe? Seventeen? Maybe eighteen? Joe was thirteen, but the Boy was too young to correctly determine other people's ages.

"Hey big-guy, what you think you're doing?" He kept raising and dropping his arms. Almost flapping them. The Boy didn't move. To him Joe was a mythical age, that included high school, cars and girlfriends. The Boy had seen movies about teenagers. *Back to the Future, The Breakfast Club, Ferris Buller's Day Off.* They were dodging principles, sneaking out and having a blast. He could hardly wait for his chance to be a teenager.

Joe got to the other side of the street and stood in front of the Boy. Joe was wearing simple blue jeans and a green T-shirt. He had short blonde hair and was beginning to learn how to shave. His inexperience with the razor on his tender skin left his face red and irritated; like a wrestler whose face had rubbed against the mat and his opponent too much.

"Whatca doing?" Joe asked. The Boy smiled.

"Oh, nothing much." The Boy kept eye contact with Joe, slightly bobbing his head.

Joe smiled. "That's cool. So you wanna have some fun?" Cars whizzed by.

"Always," the Boy said and crossed his arms. The Boy felt honored. Joe was talking to him. Joe wasn't talking down to him, telling him that he was doing something wrong, he wasn't making him leave or giving him instructions or chaffing him because he was younger. He was talking to him as if he were a teenager.

"Great. Let's play Dodge," Joe said and smiled ear to ear.

Dodge was a game created a long time ago as a way for kids to initiate others into their crew. The game was played by simply running across a busy street and running back without getting hit by any of the cars. After a while it ceased to be an initiation and became another dare bored teens pressured on each other after too much t.v. and too many stolen cigarettes. Joe had played Dodge a few times and now wanted to play it again. But he needed a partner. A spectator and someone to do it after him. That way it was more sport like and it added a certain edge of competition to it that Joe enjoyed.

Joe explained the rules to the Boy and walked to the street corner with him, pointing at the cars that drove by. "See, it's pretty simple, right? Just got to run fast and pay attention," Joe said. He put his arm around the six year old's shoulders and smiled.

The Boy was hesitant about the game. He had heard about people and pets getting run over. He knew about looking both ways before crossing a street and then to hold onto someone's hand as he passed. But this was another world. He was with the big boys now. He had to talk like a big boy, he had to think like a big boy, he had to piss and eat and sleep and party and cheat and lie and breathe like a big boy. Now was his chance. Now he could be part of that world he heard about. He would be a teenager and do teenage things if he played the game. So he agreed. He would play dodge.

The Boy continued nodding to Joe's directions. Joe looked over his shoulder and down the street again. "Okay, kido, tell ya what. I'll go first, okay? Y'know to give you an example of how it 's suppose to be done and stuff, okay?"

The Boy stood on the curb next to Joe. Joe looked to his left and to the right to see when the best time to run was. The Boy felt a nervous twinge shoot up from his stomach to the top of his throat.

Joe shot off. He jumped off the curb onto the street and ran. The cars whizzed by. He would run and suddenly stop, jerking his body back and up on his toes, then start running again. The Boy thought Joe flowed in-between the bumpers and fenders with ease. People honked their horns and gave Joe the finger. He got to the other side and shot back around. Joe ran and jumped, hammering his Nikes into the street, feet and legs exhausted, needing oxygen. Rubber tires rolled hot towards him as he jumped out of their way. Another car horn blared off and faded as the car disappeared farther down the road.

Joe made it. He sat down on the curb to catch his breathe. He looked over at the Boy. "Well, you ready there, buddy?" A black car zipped by. Joe stood up and pushed him forward. "It's okay, just wait for the right time and I'll tell you when to go, okay?" The Boy's lips were dry. His mouth was dry. The sounds around him were turned down, almost to a complete mute.

The street soon filled with cars driving by. Volvos, Mazdas, Chevrolets, Fords and Volkswagens. The Boy stood in a runner's stance, looking straight ahead at the other side of the road, his destination, his goal, where he would have to turn around and come back to where he was currently standing, next to Joe, whose sweat was starting to dry off and whose heart was no longer beating like an African drum, whose chest was no longer like ice caving in..

Joe's mouth began to open so he could let the word out. That one syllable, two lettered green word that sent racers off onto the track and the Boy into the street. Then he said it.
The Boy jumped out towards the street. No guts, no glory, right? But there was a tug.

The Boy felt a tug in mid-air, keeping him back.

Grizzly arms wrapped around him holding on tight. The Boy could feel the tense pressure throughout his ribs. The arms threw him onto a patch of wet grass. The color green smudged his elbows and stained his legs. The grizzly gardener was standing in front of him, yelling at Joe.

"Quitanse de aqui!"

Joe was terrified. His eyes opened wide. What do you do when the grizzly gardener is mad at you? Joe got up and ran away. The Gardener watched Joe run and then turned around.

"Que estas pensando nino sonso?" The Gardener was talking directly to the Boy. "Que estas pensando nino sonso?"

The Gardener kneeled down and moved close to the Boy. He wiped the sweat off his face. The Boy could feel the Gardener's strong thick breath whenever he exhaled. His lips were drawn back exposing his yellow clinched teeth. Then the Boy began to cry. His eyes contracted to the size of pin holes. His spit was thick and poisonous to swallow.

The Gardener stood up. He turned around and began to walk back to the truck and the other gardeners. He went back up the street leaving the Boy lying in the grass staring at the clouds.

The Devil and James Cameron

By: Ryan M. Jesien

Far from the luxury and glamour of Las Vegas lies the small town of Festering Springs, Nevada. It is a failure of a town burdened by several dilapidated houses, abandoned businesses, loathsome taverns, and seedy pawn shops. Despite such atrocious establishments, Festering Springs can proudly boast that it is home to the glitzy Publisher's Clearing House Casino - the location at which director James Cameron sold his soul to the devil.

According to local legend, James Cameron decided to use Festering Springs as the site for a new multimillion dollar movie, entitled "The Cotton Swab." Although everyone expected to catch a glimpse of a celebrity, to hear the reverberation of an explosion, or to experience the excitement of a car chase, nothing happened. Cameron was still in the throse of writing the script.

Despite all the waiting, excitement was rampant in the streets of Festering Springs. Stores gave discounts, people decorated their miserable houses, and a parade was held in the honor of James Cameron. Yet still, the movie was shrouded in secrecy. Not a thing was heard about the production of "The Cotton Swab."

Many months passed in waiting for the movie. People began to crowd James Cameron's trailer, wondering if he was still alive. Finally, a voice was heard

from the trailer! "I cannot create a movie of such stupidity! May the devil help me make a better one!" said the voice. A few minutes later, Cameron emerged. He looked as if he were beaten with the ugly stick. His hair was disheveled, his clothes were wrinkled, and he possessed a smell that could gag a maggot. A large folder was tucked underneath his arm that carried the name " The Cotton Swab." " What the heck have you been doing?" a man shouted. No answer came from James Cameron. He simply took off running in the direction of the Publisher's Clearing House Casino. Moments later, he was out of sight.

When in the casino, Cameron fearfully shook hands with a rather devilish creature. He was outfitted in a tasteless red leather jump suit and a tacky sequined cape. His hair was thick with grease and soot. His teeth glittered like a disco ball. He looked very much like James Brown." I hear you have a bit of a problem, Mr. Cameron" said the poorly dressed stranger.

" Yes, I need to make a successful movie and all I have is this." said James Cameron as he handed the stranger the script of " The Cotton Swab." " Are you the person who can help me?"

" Yes, I am who you are looking for. I am here to help you," said the devil.

With that, James Cameron walked with the devil into a large office in the Publisher's Clearing House Casino. " Sit!" commanded the devil, " I must read your work and see how I can help."

James Cameron sat in terror as the devil read. He seemed to regret coming to the devil for help, but he realized there was no way out. Cameron then noticed the devil suffer as he read the screen play. " Could it really be that bad?" Cameron silently questioned, " I hope something can be done."

After what seemed like years, the devil had finished reading. " It is impossible to create your screen play into a work of art." said the devil, " Quite frankly, it made me violently ill. However, I can do something to help."

"What can you do? What will you do?" James Cameron asked as he fished for words.

" I will grant you success beyond your wildest dreams by giving you this," stated the devil as he set a burnt screen play on the table. " With " The Titanic", I can assure that you will be king of the world!"

After flipping through the pages, James Cameron was rather dismayed - for it was not much better than his own opus. The only difference was that the action took place on a luxury cruise ship instead of a Wal-Mart in east central Iowa. Nevertheless, he saw the sheer brilliance of the devil's work in " The Titanic" .

"One question" asked Cameron, " Who will come to see this movie?"

"By granting you dominion of the man/child Leonardo DiCaprio, 14 year old girls will see your movie in masses greater than Avogadro's number," answered the devil, "Do you choose to sign?"

James Cameron signed his name and soul to the devil faster than greased lightning. He left the small town of Festering Springs and went to a cold area in the Atlantic ocean. There, he filmed " The Titanic" and became very rich and famous. The movie won many awards and everyone went home happy - so the legend goes.

Although James Cameron still is around today, he still watches his back for a being dressed in a tasteless red leather jump suit and a tacky sequined cape.

Katie Klimas
17 Bannock Court
Randallstown, Maryland
21133

King Henry

My mother recites Shakespeare in her sleep. Her soft whispers that never reach her own ears keep me awake at night. I imagine she dreams of Romeo dancing with Cleopatra, who is having an illicit love affair with Orlando on the side.

When she first took me to see "Henry V," I was six years old. The words were French to me: beautiful, lyrical, and nonsensical. My mother murmured to me that King Henry was my father, and I basked in the glory that I was a true princess.

She never really told me about my father, other than the fact that he never sent her the child support payments she needed. When I asked for a bike at eight, she told me I couldn't have one because my father hadn't sent money that month. When I asked for a television at thirteen, she told me that it was my father's fault that she couldn't get me one. When I needed a prom dress at sixteen, she she sewed one because my father forgot to pay for me.

I wasn't an "intended pregnancy" my grandmother used to tell me through the steam of Earl Gray tea. It wasn't that "he" didn't love me; I just wasn't convenient for his life then. My grandmother never told me who "he" was, just that he meant to be

there for my birthdays, and he meant to be there for Christmas.

And it was last Christmas that I first met him. My mother was unsuccessfully stringing popcorn into a chain she wanted to hang on our bare frosted artificial Christmas tree. I can't explain why I looked out the window at that exact moment. Or why I knew it was him. I just did.

He was standing outside, wearing a thick navy coat that was a size too big for him. His chin was covered in stubble that was too long to be attractive, and his eyes were dark and cold.

When I ran across the street, my mother yelled words I didn't hear. I stood in front of him, not even sure that he was who I thought; my mouth was frozen in spite of the questions I wanted to ask.

"Hey." His breath froze and fell to the earth. He fidgeted and avoided looking at me. My bare arms were blanketed in goose pimples.

My mother pounded onto the street, cursing at me about pneumonia, then she noticed him. She regarded my father as she would a dirty piece of clothing on the floor: seemed to wonder how he'd gotten lost in the shuffle, was disgusted at his current appearance.

"Marc." The word seemed almost familiar on her tongue, as if she practiced saying it in back rooms and on coffee breaks.

"I just needed to see you," he said, "I should go." He put his hand into his pocket, and I imagined the kind of lint my

father would gather. Deep tan, tight, and hard.

"It's Christmas," my mother said to him. The meaning somehow weighed in the air yet floated over my head.

"I know." He looked at my feet. My socks were a deep red; my grandmother had given them to me, intending for them to match the red and white checked curtains in my room.

"Don't you have anything to say?" My mother's words were gentle, rough, frail, and strong.

"I hope you. . ." he stopped and looked at the sky, as if it held the poetry that I wanted to hear spout from his mouth. I love you; I want to come home; I want to be with you for the holiday; I want to buy you bikes and televisions, and beautiful flowing ball gowns. ". . .have a merry Christmas."

My mother didn't look at him. She didn't yell at him like I expected her to, either. She walked back into the house.

He glanced at me, then turned and started walking away.

"Where can I reach you?" I called.

He didn't even turn around.

That night, I searched the stars for poetry and listened to my mother murmur about lost affairs between Marc Antony and Ophelia, who waited for him, even though she knew he'd never return.

Jaime Lang
2/12/00
260 Kenwood Rd.
Pasadena, MD 21122

HOME

As I travel down that road…
My eyes behold:

A spacious field of Green and Gold,
Rippling in the Wind like waves.
Flowers bloom on the first Spring day.
Children climbing up the trees
Laughing.
A baby crying-
An old woman smiling.
Life.

As I travel down that road…
My eyes behold:

An old woman smiling at a story untold.
A Weeping willow-
Shading two lovers as they sit hand in hand.
The Summer sun radiates the land.
Bees buzzing.
Singing.
The lovers join in a soft, close embrace.
Love.

As I travel down that road…
My eyes behold:

The change of season as it unfolds.
Red and Yellow Autumn leaves.
"Why are you so sad Weeping willow tree?"
The days growing shorter-
The nights long.

(Lang - con't)

Where is the old woman?
Where is the song?
Change.

As I travel down that road…
my eyes behold:

Trees shivering in the Winter cold.
A family huddled around a bed-
An old woman gently rests her head.
Sadness.
Her last breath
Rustling through the Wind.
Now it is I who is Weeping.
Death.

No more traveling down that road;
the farmhouse gone,
the land sold.

Yet, the memories of childhood always remain.
Winter, Autumn, Summer, Spring.
And in my heart my spirit roams
down the road of my youth
to a place I call Home.

I crane my neck to the sky, only to see the wall tower above me. It reminds me of my earliest memory: I was about four years old, and I looked up to see my father's face, full of confidence and pride; he seemed miles away. He is closer now--we can easily look face to face, and I am still growing; it is only a matter of time before I surpass him. I step up to the wall. I can hear its whispers, although I do not know whether they come from the wall or my thoughts. "You cannot do this, for I am too tall, and you are a mere child. You do not need to see my summit; there is nothing there that is not here. Few people bother to climb this wall anyway, there is no shame in staying on the ground, just like everyone else. There is a word for that: mediocrity. I know these lies, I have even told them to myself. Mediocre is an adjective I have come to loathe.

"On belay?" I ask my father. This simply means is your end of the rope--the umbilical cord between us tight?" I already know the answer.

"Belay on," he replies. In those three seconds we have bonded. We have shown our mutual trust for each other, in the simplest of languages; one that needs only four words. I know that should I slip, he will be there to grab my rope, and he knows I will not do anything overconfident. I will remember my limitations and not fall.

I step back--not from the wall, but from the moment. I take in the world around me; I hear ropes sliding through hands, grunts of effort and whopping of triumph. The room smells like sweat, a good sweat, the sweat of effort and teamwork. These climbers are my brethren, my comrades. They know how to fight gravity, how to fight mediocrity. I feel lucky to have a gift like this, the ability to share a deep, personal trust with my father, with friends around me. I can set a goal that I can be proud of and then do it.

Finally, I grab one of the handholds on the wall; the whispers die down. Like any journey, the first few steps are the hardest. My body is not used to the new stresses on it and I don't feel totally secure. But I continue and my confidence does not fail me. I ascend the wall without any snags. At the top, I look down to see how far I've come. The pride in me erupts to the surface and I sound my barbaric walp across the rooftops of the world. No, this journey is not some 75 on homework that I didn't put any effort into. This is my creation, something that I can be proud of. I look down to see my father, seemingly miles away. He sees the confidence in my face; he is smiling.

- Mike Levien

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Briar Patches

The asphalt was warm on their bare feet, the late summer heat sticking like honey to the black stones. The country air was composed of a symphony, from the marshland nocturnals, and the scent of fresh dew collecting on the olive green grass.

Almost a mile back the car had stalled and they found themselves in the middle of emptiness. Aleshance remembered that home was not far down the road, maybe two miles at the most, so they walked. She was too eager to reach the country cottage to wait, not because it had been a year since she had seen it, but because she had received a call that her grandfather had died. She had left immediately at the notice, leaving college, her apartment and work behind. If it hadn't of been for Gwydion Briar she would have never stopped to leave messages of her emergency for the professors or her manager.

Gwydion had been waiting that morning on the bench, and she knew he had been there since before dawn, watching the heavy belly of warm marmalade stretch into the sky with it's mane and arms of gold. She invited him to come, mostly because he knew how to sooth her when she was stressed, and turn her fears into dust. She also brought him because she was afraid to leave him alone, abandoned as he was by his own family, left to live in a shack on the highway. He was from England, she supposed, his accent suspicious, but he would never say. What his given name had been she never knew, but he called himself Gwydion, and she gave him the nickname Briar. It was only fitting since he had fallen in the briar patch while trying to climb over a fence to show her the ruins of a building. They had spent an hour picking out the thorns from his skin. Gwydion Briar was not like people Aleshance knew, he was

of imagination and curious adventures. He reminded her of the youthful Peter Pan character come to life, facing the world alone.

"I don't know how you do it, Briar," she sighed, her sandals hanging at her sides.

"What?" his voice as low as the hum of the night world.

"Survive all the pain and emptiness," a light breeze lifted her chestnut hair off her neck.

"Is that what you are feeling?" he asked, his feverish green eyes enkindled by the silver gowned moon. A hint of the glow haloed his mahogany head, and his cottony voice kept her tears from falling.

Aleshance looked away and down the road they took. "The path gets rocky up a ways, maybe we should put on our shoes." It was a fear that held her, looking to deep inside herself, and it made her change the subject.

Gwydion smiled, mild as a lamb, and stopped. "I think we should leave them off, so we can feel the stones between our toes. We will know the path better in the dark that way."

"But our feet are not use to the sharp rocks, they will bleed."

"Sometimes you have to bleed in order to grow stronger," the carrot beard he wore was like little gold threads in the night light. It highlighted his curled lips.

Aleshance realized what he was truly saying, and nodded. His wisdom was beyond her's, and she trusted it.

"Now, on a happier note... I just thought of the most exhilarating thing."

"What?" she noticed his angelic smile turn impish, and shook her head with a short laugh.

"Put out your arms like you are flying," he instructed, and together they did. "Then look up at the moon, and spin."

The Power Behind Disguise

Great comedies are made to evoke laughter, allowing a temporary escape from reality for the reader. The comedies of William Shakespeare often elicit a "thoughtful laughter," engaged only by the analytical reader who is capable of chuckling at incongruity of situations and improbable disguises of characters. In The Taming of the Shrew, a combination of High and Low levels of comedy give rise to a witty and intellectual play. In creating this comedy, Shakespeare disguises two women of the 16th century through exterior qualities, forcing the reader to discover the underlying power behind the overbearing boldness of one and the deceptively docile appearance of the other.

In the old city of Padua, two sisters, Kate and Bianca, attract their future husbands in opposite manners. One sister is said to be as wicked as the devil, yet she, aware of her reputation as "Kate the Curst," stays true to her scolding and unyielding nature. Her sister, the fair and beautiful Bianca, in accordance to society's expectation, charms every man that breathes her perfumed air. Both women possess a hidden power and intelligence, enabling them to benefit from their relationships.

To tolerate a "shrew" like Kate, a man must be blind and deaf *or* uphold a similar arrogant spirit and chastising wit. Such a man appears in the persona of Petruchio of Verona. Kate and Petruchio's characters are bold and dauntless, as both amaze others by unexpected physical actions. In response to her father's hiring of tutors for his daughters, Kate, the eldest, expresses her displeasure and "with a most impatient devilish spirit…she stroke [Hortensio] on the head"(II,i,151-153) with his lute. Similar to this improper action, Petruchio, feeling the urge to make a ridiculous scene, "threw the sops all in the sexton's face"(III,ii,173) at their marriage ceremony. What prompts their mischievous acts originates from their dismissal of society's expectation for ladies and gentlemen to

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Kristen Hawk

be wholesomely educated and in genteelly refined. Never before had Kate encountered another human of the same caliber. Kate and Petruchio, "two raging fires," thrive off intimate mind schemes and "consume the one thing that feeds their fury"(II,i,132-133). Counteracting with the other's unique individuality, they continue to take pleasure in games of wit, as if these contests were essential to their survival. At one point Petruchio proclaims his wife "waspish," wearing the sting in her tail. However, Kate, being intellectually witty, comes back with one of the most thoughtful blows to his ear, that a wasp carries his sting "in the tongue"(II,i,213). This conversation of sarcastic responses is playful, flirtatious, and unreserved, suggesting a deep attraction of their wild natures. Kate's particular reply justifies her often bawdy wit beneath her outwardly, jarring nature. Through Kate's vulgar, yet intricate, humor, the reader uncovers how Shakespeare purposely cloaks a mask of overbearing abruptness. Thus, concealing Kate's true power of quick wit. The unwillingness to relinquish her "shrew-like" traits, in the end, allows her to retain her individuality, engage equally in games with Petruchio, and establish an exciting marriage.

Like Kate, Bianca receives what she desires, but uses a different power: a facade of beauty, properness, and obedience.

Suitors of every age swoon at the sight of fair Bianca, wishing they might captivate her heart and win the approval of her father Bapista. Prim and proper, young Bianca is society's prime example of a woman of the time. Unlike her sharp and cunning sister Kate, Bianca speaks softly with the utmost sincerity and allurement. "Her coral lips" and "perfume..air" lures her future husband Lucentio, who is blinded by only the "sacred and sweet"(I,i,174-176) charm. But Bianca's masked identity obscures how she changes beauty and propriety to her favor, granting her the upper hand in the marriage. Once married, Bianca casts aside her demureness and submissive attitude, leaving a commanding authority in the relationship. Unconsciously, Lucentio becomes controlled by his fair wife. In the last scene, the husbands place a bet on whose wife will be the first to obey the

Kirsten Hawk

husband's command; everyone believes it will be the submissive Bianca. Surprisingly, she does not adhere to Lucentio's wish, replying "The more fool you for laying on my duty"(V,ii,129). Alas the truth behind Bianca is revealed; once married, Bianca is not so obedient and yielding. She proclaims Lucentio the fool for he has mistaken her for being a docile bride. Again, Shakespeare hides a woman's inner power by focusing on the exterior facade. Through careful interpretation, the reader realizes the dominant trait of Bianca is deceit, not submission. In creating her character, Shakespeare exposes Bianca's appealing method of taking advantage to fulfill her desires.

Kate and Bianca, at opposite ends of the spectrum, both possess a manipulating power in their character that enables them to benefit in the relationships. Other characters of the play perceive them only by the external actions and do not fully apprehend their disguises. What is apparent, and only to the discerning audience of the play, is the strong foundation in Kate and Petruchio's marriage for their natural personalities unveil a deep love and affection. Neither changes, especially Kate who continues her quick witted personage. Like her sister, Bianca still possesses an inner power, but uses it to hold the authority in her superficial marriage. The power of a woman is remarkably evident in Shakespeare's comedy for he chooses women to personify the dynamic gender in his play.

LARA MARAZITI

Carpe diem is a Latin phrase meaning "seize the day". It is attributed to Horace in his work Ode I xi 8. It urges people to enjoy life in the present and live each day to the fullest. It is a phrase that is easily said, but hard to do. If you have the will power to use this philosophy everyday, it will greatly alter your life. You must be careful how you use it though, because it has the ability to create problems for your future.

Carpe diem is a way of putting the mistakes you made yesterday behind you and starting anew. It is taking all opportunities while you can. When you live like this you get the most you can out of life. Everything you do and everyone you meet is an opportunity waiting to happen. If you seize that opportunity who knows what will come out of it. It may be a new job, a new friend, a new way of looking at things, the possibilities are endless. Using the philosophy, carpe diem, will take you far in life. Your life will be exciting and there will always be something new just around the bend.

Although carpe diem does sound like paradise, there are risks involved. For example, while you are out seizing the day, you are forgetting about the future. It is important to look ahead towards the future because you must set goals for yourself. If you don't set goals you will never accomplish anything. For example, you must plan ahead for the future financially. If you spend all your money today there won't be any for tomorrow. The past should have a very important impact on your life. Although you must focus on today, you must not forget about the past. The past is a time for memories and to look back on your mistakes so you do not

repeat them. You should not focus solely on the future or the past, but you should never forget about them. They play a very important part in making your life the best it can be.

The philosophy, carpe diem, has been around for centuries and has stood the test of time. It shows that through the ages the concerns of people are very much the same. We will never know if we will be here tomorrow and for that we must live each day like it is our last. As John Lennon said, "Life is what happens to you while your busy making other plans." I think our goal as a society is to focus on the present while achieving a balance of learning from the past and planning for the future.

Silent Reflection on a Weekday Afternoon

Sitting alone on a cold winter day
Sifting through the mail mostly filled with bills
Doing busy work crying out to get done
An afternoon of laziness
Waiting for the fire's warmth to wrap me in it's glow
Taking a deep breath
Aromatherepy: Oxygen
Concentrating on the heart
Reflecting on why it beats
Hearing my own breath- silence
The sensation of the oxygen exchange in my lungs
Life is good.

-Danielle Mathers

Kelli Moore
22 Chevy Chase Road
Erial, New Jersey 08081

Mechanical Figures

We are mechanical figures in the
factory of God's eye- We are Barbie
dolls in Athena's playhouse, sapp
Blessed with different stories-
A superhuman soap opera

Some can feast their bellies on the
everlasting meal of destiny- the appetizer
of high society, a Chardonnay of wealth, and
the raspberry sorbet of iced fortune. Others
must lick the sour crumbs of despair on the
curdled streets of sorrow.

Royals pleasure themselves on crystal beds
with robes of black pearls. The remainder lay
on the tattered sheets of broken lily pads
lost in a crimson sea.
Lucky offspring decorate their closets
with ruby gowns, sapphire collars, buttons of lace

Julia Myers

"Would You like Fries with That?"

The bell on the door jingled as someone entered the restaurant. Every time she heard that familiar sound Cathy cringed. Tom, her manger, walked by carrying a load of dirty dishes and commented, "You know that maroon shirt really goes well with your green hair."

"Thanks, Tom," Cathy said with agitation in her voice.

It was Cathy's first day back to work and normal life after senior week at the ocean when she went a little crazy, totally unlike her. Her friends, though, were not half as surprised as she was when she got three earrings, a nose ring and cut and dyed her long blonde hair. When she was at the ocean her green hair did not make her feel as out of place; she actually got compliments. Back at work though she shuddered every time a new customer was seated in her section. She knew they were making fun of her in their heads.

"I've even gotten lower tips." She told Tom.

He just laughed and said she was overreacting. Cathy could not believe it. She knew her customers were making assumptions about her. She could see it they way they looked at her. She even heard a little boy ask his mother about her hair in front of her. Cathy just smiled shyly as the mother scolded her son. The earrings and the nose ring she could hide, but with the hair she would just have to wait till it grew out.

(Myers)

Why don't we have to wear hats as part of our uniforms, Cathy asked herself.

One stupid night, one stupid dare the "goody two shoes" could not turn down and now look at her.

Thank God college orientation is six weeks away. Could you see me at University of Virginia looking like this? They would throw me out or at least take away my scholarship. My parents, oh, my God, my parents would freak if they saw me like this. Oh, I'm so glad they decided to take that cruise around the Caribbean and won't be back till right before orientation

Flipping burgers, Cathy thought back on her high school days and the names she was called. Miss Straight A, kiss up, studyaholic and all the times she was accused of studying for midterms over Thanksgiving break. God, would they not laugh if they could see me now.

The Wreath

Trey Perkins

"Sometimes at night I think I hear things. Things I shouldn't hear. When morning comes, I'll swear it was just the wind. But at night, it comes again and sings by my window. Its always a sad song. Sometimes I think its my brother Alwyn singing to me. The voice sounded so sweet and pure. By first light I'll give in and blame the wind."

From the diary of a Madison farm wife; dated 1854

Thatch was old; older than he cared to remember. He'd been on the road for ages and his song had saddened him. The freight yards and whistle stops had put distance between the memories but somehow it didn't heal the ache in his heart. It was true, he wasn't a particularly emotional sort, but then the small faces made him question the reasoning of such a deed. He felt a certain relief in knowing that there was a higher source to question such matters. Oh my yes, a much higher source indeed!

Thatch always traveled alone, it was the nature of his business. Few men sought to seek him out and those that did never had a second chance to reconsider. Journalists would have labeled him a "hobo." Children called him "Johnny Gray," and many a grandmother cradled a child to sleep whispering faintly, "better to be asleep and tucked in bed before Johnny Gray comes to town."

To the small ones, his was the face in the night-filled window. His shadow frequented a hundred mid-western farms. Although he had never served in the Confederate or Union Army he had been at Antietam, Shiloh, and Vicksburgh. He had reaped the benefits. He had aged many a wife, leaving her alone to match strength with a horse and plow.

And what would happen when Johnny Gray came to town?

Thatch pulled his tattered rags close about his chest. Snow was beginning to drift through rotted boards in the freight car's roof. Shadows moved at the opposite end of the car and a gravelly voice cried out, "Damn you boy. You take the pledge and I'll take the whiskey."

For a moment Thatch peered out past a crack in the car. Smoke from the engine clouded his vision, but the night was full of a thousand shadows. Gapping trees with long, narrow branches reached out across the snow touching the train briefly as it crossed their path. Yes, the way was familiar; he'd been here before. Too many years ago, before the steel spikes had been laid.

Thatch reached into his blanket roll and pulled out his battered harmonica. He moistened his lips and began to play "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?"

The train traveled onward through the night.

The building rested in the early morning light. It was a gloomy, sprawling structure with two towering peaks overlooking the town of Mattawa. Someone years before had suggested that the towers resembled a "widow's walk;" surely it was an apt description befitting most of the occupants.

To the townsfolk, the building was merely referred to as "the place." Few of the inhabitants from the town below chose to take on the role of visitor. Those that did were so overwhelmed by the sights and smells that a second trip would have surely provoked nightmares. A simple reality prevailed here; "the place" was occupied by an odd-ball assortment of prairie folk. Remnants held over from the great push west. Like so many shadows they walked aimlessly through the winding passageways. Most of the residents remained hopelessly lost somewhere in the past. Night time was awful here. Occupants spoke the names of family and friends long dead and forgotten; even enemies were remembered passionately here.

Julian "Greasy" McFarland knew most of the occupants. He cared for the old man who had been left alone to attend a wasted farm. He shared stories with the school teacher who no longer had any students. He tried to comfort the old soldier without legs by telling him that his boots were away being reheeled. Greasy cared about them. All of them. He viewed them as gentle souls passing quietly through the long gray corridors of "the place." Greasy was their attendant and that made him somewhat subordinate to their demands. Their demands were few and far between and that made Greasy happy. They were too busy with the past to overburden him with demands. Besides, his seven dollars a month more than paid for his room above the livery stable and his meals came with the job. Greasy knew a good thing when he managed to stumble onto it. This job was the "Real McCoy" and at the well-traveled age of forty-two Greasy firmly believed that life offered few Christmas trees.

"Take it as you find it," yessir, that's what his Pappy told him and that's exactly what he did. Traveling with that medicine show had been all wrong; he couldn't carry a tune and because he couldn't farmers didn't really believe that he had been "purified." Meals were few and far between and he hadn't received a plugnickle in the two years he traveled with Dr. B.O. Lively's "Medical Anomalies and Curiosities Show."

Yessir, he had respect here. He was his own boss. No more beatings because his singing didn't electrify the townfolk into buying Dr. Lively's magical cure.

"Take it as you find it," his Pappy"s words haunted him. But sometimes, when he was asked to work late at "the place," he had second thoughts. All those stories about people so long ago. Names that belonged to the dead. Children going on to the Great Beyond. It hurt Greasy. Sometimes Greasy would cry himself to sleep thinking about little Rosie Strindelton. He tried to imagine how she might have looked if something awful hadn't

happened. Once he tried to draw a picture of how he thought Taddie Sullivan would have looked. When he finished he was going to present the crudely drawn sketch to Mrs. Sullivan. Greasey reasoned that it would only make the old lady grieve all the more. It was hard for Greasy to believe that someone that old had been a three-year old child.

Why did something awful always have to happen? Oh, how he loved Rosie Strindelton! The thought of her sweet gentle face brought tears to his eyes. A voice carried through the hall.

"Them boys in blue on them tall, scrawny horses ain't gonna drag me here offa my place next time. No sir! No they ain't."

"I guess you're right Miss Annie," muttered Greasy.

She had him cornered on the great stairway. He had to listen. He didn't mind, not really.

"They said I ain't right. Shouldn't live by myself so far from others. Said I only have to spend the winter. They didn't say which one. I wanna leave this winter, not next winter."

Greasy looked her straight in the face. Miss Annie was nervous, perhaps a little frightened. Greasy added, "Them soldiers was only thinking about your safety."

"Hog manure! They didn't say which one." She gasped; her breath was short." I mean they didn't say which one. Could have been last winter or the winter before that. I've been here too many winters. I wonder which winter they meant. When can I go home."

Greasy knew the answer to her question. Miss Annie was here to stay. He paused and as he took her hand to lead her down the staircase: "Not this winter Miss Annie. Everything's turned to ice. There's too much snow outside."

The room was just as gray and overcast as the mid-afternoon light hovering beyond the dingy window. The light that managed to penetrate the narrow window

seemed to find its way to the large wreath positioned just above the wrought-iron bed. It was overflowing with faded ribbons. The ribbons were secured to intricately woven locks of hair.

The occupant waited silently and patiently in the shadows. She had lived well beyond what some would have said was her alloted time. Her world was now a vision of light and dark shadows; shadows waltzing in step with distant meomeries.

Nellie Jordoc rested her head against the chair's sturdy back. She had been asleep, or so she thought. Her eyes told her little; the cataracts blended colours and faces into meaningless images. She felt a presence. Someone moved in front of the window.

"The blond hair...It feels like silk!"

She recognized the voice. She had expected someone else. Greasy moved toward Nellie.

"That curly lock, the blond one, it belonged to my brother Willie. He was six years younger than me." She tried to forcus her useless eyes in Greasy's direction.

Greasy gently touched the silver lock and added, "Diptheria?"

Nellie paused. "Yes Greasy it was diptheria. Same demon that claimed my husband and daughter. Paul's hair is the blackest lock next to the topmost ribbon."

Greasy couldn't help himself. Sometimes he asked to many questions, but it made him feel good just to touch the tightly woven strands of hair.

"How long did it take to make the wreath Miss Nellie?"

"Years. My Mama started it when my brother Willie passed on. I can still picture little Willie teasing Mama so."

"I like to hear you talk about your family. It makes me feel good." Greasy cherished his time with Nellie, stories about her family fascinated him.

"Your company makes me feel good Greasy. You know, sometimes when I touch the wreath I feel that they're all so close."

Greasy looked out the window. It was getting late and he knew he'd have other chores to finish before suppertime. The weather bothered him.

"Wind's getting fierce. It's blowin snow every which way." He wanted to do something for Miss Nellie but when he glanced in her direction she was asleep. He'd settle for placing a warm blanket across her lap. Greasy thought her dreams were surely better company than sitting alone and waiting. He left her to her dreams.

By nightfall Mattawa was besieged by a blizzard. The train arrived at the depot in a cloud of icy blue smoke. No one saw the shadowy figure leap silently from the battered freight car. When the smoke cleared the depot was deserted.

Thatch knew the spot well. It would be comfortable for a night's stay. The ledge partially overlooked the sprawling building. It was late but a few windows in the building below remained lit. Thatch knew what had to be done. He settled back before the meager fire and waited for the night to become silent. "Lorena" was her favorite tune and it was his sole selection for the evening. He would play it over and over until his business here was completed. He brought the harmonica close to his lips and waited for the wind to fade away.

Wind whistled against the window. For a moment Nettie thought she remembered the tune. It was very dark in the room but she wasn't afraid. She wasn't sure if she was awake or asleep; colours drifted aimlessly together. The room seemed to be moving around her like a slowly moving carousel. Colours became brighter and Nettie was certain that she could actually see the different hues. Bright summer colours, forest greens and earthy browns. Seasons drifted past, carried on the sturdy carousel. Others were riding with her. She could see their faces. Sharp features; pleasent smiles. A small child beckoned to her. Nettie recognized the child's face. Oh how many years it had been! She reached out to touch his

small hand and as she had did the carousel began to pick up speed.

Nettie closed her eyes and thought of summers long past.

Sometimes when you looked at it the hairs resembled strands of finely woven silk. Locks were joined in an intricate cross stitch. The strands of hair were of various textures and colours.

The morning sunlight greeted the wreath head-on and the faded ribbons denoted its age. A carefully tied green bow acknowledged a new addition. It was placed next to a lock of gray hair; the only strands of gray to be found on the wreath.

Greasy had taken the lock of hair from Nettie before the others had found her. At first he thought she was asleep.

He begged them for the wreath. It was to be discarded with her other possessions, but Greasy had his way. Now the wreath hung from a wall in his room above the livery stable. He felt good about that. It reminded him of Nettie Jordoc and now perhaps he wouldn't miss her so much. She had been kind to Greasy and he would repay her by remembering. Her family would become the family he had never had.

Greasy looked at the wreath. The sunlight was too bright. He'd have to move it from the wall above his cot before the sunlight faded Miss Nettie's green ribbon.

As we danced in the moonlit skies above,
His hands became my bellwethers,
Sweating palms of gentle madid roses,
After a midsummer day's shower.
His feet became my ballet steps,
Twirling around in mystical circles,
Making our passionate passage
One vestige at a time.

As we swimmingly kissed,
Our breath was captured
In a vault of pulsating love,
Retaining our inner most desires,
Within a lost world of whirling dreams.

Entering heaven's celestial gates,
We waltzed through clouds of silent purity,
Holding the mighty terrace above.
Into a palace we danced,
Into God we were found.

Jennifer Pipino

Kate Prisby
28 Knollwood Drive
Lititz, PA 17543
(717) 625-2447

Changing the Mascot for a Better Community

Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of America in 1492, began the exploitation of Native American Indians. The Native American theme is linked with dairy products, cars, tobacco, cartoons, crayons, and schools. In this day and age when most stereotypes in America are disappearing, it would be logical for the Native American Indian stereotype to be disappearing too. The pleas from Native American Indians to quit using Native American imagery goes unnoticed in America. If the pleas were being heard there would not be thousands of schools using the stereotypical Native American image to represent themselves. Schools needs to speak out against this stereotyping. If Americans truly wants to end discrimination, these mascots must be changed.

It is possible that schools mean to honor Native Americans by using them as mascots. No matter what the intent is, many Native Americans do not view mascots or motifs as honoring them. Native American mascots are viewed inaccurately. The name Redskin labels a group of people by the color of their skin, Savage has a violent meaning, and Warrior is often accompanied with thoughts of fierce fighting. There are multiple colors of Native American Indians, and there are many tribes practicing pacifism. Don Pelcher, chairman of the Sac and Fox nation of Missouri asks, "Why don't they call themselves the Whiteskin Warriors,' 'the Yellowskin Warriors' or 'the Blackskin Warriors'?" People know it is wrong to have teams like Fighting Priests, Battling Jews, Mighty Negroes, and Charging Christians. However, people view Indian mascots differently. The National Congress of American Indians' request to get rid of these school mascots because Native Americans find them offensive is not heard. The Indian mascot remains in thousands of school districts. Schools should rethink the "good intentions" which promote these mascots.

In 1998, the Los Angeles Board of Education decided to ban Native American mascots, team names, and other related items from local high schools. The Society of Indian Psychologists say that,

> Stereotypical and historically inaccurate images of Indians in general interfere with learning about them by creating,

> supporting and maintaining oversimplified and inaccurate views of indigenous peoples and their cultures. When stereotypical representations are taken as factual information, they contribute to the development of cultural biases and prejudices.

How sad it is that schools keep these mascots and continue to portray Native American Indians incorrectly. Indian mascots are at sporting events to get the crowd rowdy and to bang on a drum. Drums, face paint, and headdresses are parts of religious traditions. Using these as props in pep rallies and on the football fields, promote inaccurate views of what Indians did and currently do. Schools are supposed to teach tolerance and respect. Communities hurt people with the use of Native American mascots. This needs to change.

Introducing the Indian population to other civilizations forever changed their way of life. Soon, countries stormed America to take Native Americans home as slaves and to make them a part of their "civilized world." Then, the "white man" settled in America bringing disease and famine. Foreigners instigated wars by forcing Native Americans off their homelands. Settlers ruined Indian villages and raped Indian women. Today, Native American Indians live on small reservations with land that the government sees as useless. Native American Indians have one of the highest suicide rates in the nation; this is no wonder considering all of the hardships they have endured. Still, schools continue to print pictures of Native Americans on gym floors, basketball jerseys, and other paraphernalia. What an honor it must be! Perhaps Jews would feel honored if Germany, the country which Hitler used to murder countless Jewish people, would start putting the Star of David on rugby uniforms. Schools should listen to the request of no longer using Indians as mascots and school symbols. These images are painful and embarrassing; they do not instill pride in American Indians' hearts. It is time for America which preaches, "God bless America," to start blessing the wishes of America's native brothers and sisters and leave them alone.

Schools need to toss the Indian mascot and motif away because these images are found offensive by much of the American Indian population. There are plenty of other figures to use as mascots. Many Native American mascots have no historical link to communities; a mascot which accurately represents communities should instead be used. It is not necessary for a mascot to be a particular ethnic or religious group. People are offended by Native American mascots. Tradition does not justify the exploitation of human beings. American Indians are people who have feelings like anyone else, and they are asking schools to no longer view them as objects. They want to be recognized as people. They are not asking for much.

Daniel Prud'homme

REALITY

Is green green to everyone, is blue blue?
Is the sun my yellow or yours?
Do I look to you as I look to me?
No one will ever know, the closest bridge to our mind is words.
Reality is inescapable.

If Mr. Slick fell would he still be smooth?
Would his mind let him forget his seat on the throne of pride?
The outside can play it off, but the inside gains another scar from doubt.
Embarrassment is the only truth when there are no doors with locks.

Society and its laws, manners, and values melt the mind.
It fences in the brain and guides it to blindness.
There is no such thing as intelligence and ugly is only different.
Brain never beats gun, beauty fades with age.

Do I have to meditate- or study an atom to understand?
No, reality is seen only in the broken and humble
And to the blind, when the world's eyes close for eternity.

The Diary (excerpt) Gina Nalston

Jenna sat on the swing with her uncombed hair dangling in her eyes. Through the wisps of hair Jenna watched Anna Beth prance around the yard in her pink ruffled dress with her glossy locks playing catch-up behind her. Jenna looked down at her overalls and with her hand tried to cover-up the faded stain on her right pant leg. Anna Beth didn't pay any attention to her. Instead she pretended to be a princess. She had offered to let Jenna be her servant but Jenna had declined and instead plopped down on the swing which is where she remained until her mother finally came to retrieve her.

At the first sight of her mother, Jenna sprinted to where she and Anna's mother, Mrs. Andrews, stood in the driveway chatting. The two mothers talked for a while and the whole time Jenna leaned against the car releasing an occasional sigh. Jenna listened to bits and pieces of the conversation but tuned in when her mother and Mrs. Andrews agreed to set up another play date for the two girls. Upon hearing this Jenna let out an unusually loud sigh and rolled her eyes. Eventually the mothers stopped talking and Jenna and her mother got into the car. As they pulled out of the driveway, Jenna watched Anna Beth still playing in the front yard. Her dress showed no signs of being dirty and her golden hair was still flowing behind her.

Eleven years later Anna Beth died. The funeral was during school so Jenna and some of her close friends decided to attend the service. When they arrived at the church Jenna noticed her parents' car parked next to Anna's parents' car and remembered that they had come together. Walking into the church, Jenna listened to her friends' words of remorse but did not participate in the mourning. With each step her knees shook ever so slightly and she kept her eyes looking down as if willing the floor to open up and swallow her. Jenna heard the pounding of her shoes as they hit the stone floor. The sound of each step echoed all along the dimly lit hallway that led

into the room where Anna's body rested for the viewing. Jenna and her friends rounded the corner and entered the room where the service was going to be held. As they waited in the slowly moving line that led to Anna, Jenna intently watched the floor and kept her mouth shut. When they finally reached the front of the line Jenna was the last of her friends to kneel before the body. Anna's eyes were closed and somehow her cheeks were still pink. The glossy locks were brushed out as always and rested underneath her body; trapped. She grasped a single rose between her fingers and Jenna noticed that her nails were still pink from her last manicure.

Jenna, someday when I'm older my mommy says I can get my nails done just like she does.

The smile on Anna's lips confused Jenna and she half expected Anna to get up and walk away. When Jenna finished her examination she hurried to catch up with her friends who were searching for an open pew.

They sat at the side of the church in an attempt to remove themselves from the grieving family members who had positioned themselves in the center pews. Jenna sat with her eyes facing the floor, her hands in her lap. Occasionally she looked up to watch the mourners parade into the church, kneel before the casket and, sobbing, take a seat. She recognized many of the people who had come to say goodbye to Anna Beth. Jack, Anna's boyfriend, was sitting in the front middle pew with his head in his hands rocking back and forth. His parents sat on either side of him giving him an occasional pat on the back and a tearful smile. Jenna shifted her gaze to watch the line of mourners growing longer and longer at the back of the room. By the time the service was ready to begin the entire right section of pews was filled with students from Jefferson High. All were crying except Jenna.

When Jenna returned home that day she found her mother still in her black funeral clothes, sitting at the kitchen table drinking a cup of tea. Jenna halted before entering the room and started to back away from the doorway hoping that her mother hadn't noticed her presence but that was too much to hope for.

"Hi sweetie, did you just get home?"

"Yeah," she replied. "Amy and Keith just dropped me off."

"You didn't drive this morning?"

"No, Dad took the car, remember?"

"Oh right."

With that, Jenna grabbed an apple off the counter and quickly tried to escape from the kitchen to find sanctuary in her bedroom, but her mother stopped her.

"Jenna, where are you going? Come sit here with me for a minute."

Jenna's shoulders dropped and she slowly returned to the kitchen where she took the seat opposite her mother at the table.

"So, what did you think today?" her mother asked.

"Think about what?"

"About what? Anna Beth's service. You were there weren't you? I only ask because I didn't see you at all. I was kind of hoping you would come sit with me and Daddy."

"I sat with my friends. They wanted me to sit with them."

"Hmm, well, I sat with Mr. and Mrs. Andrews. I didn't think Mrs. Andrews was going to make it the whole way through the service. At one point she broke down and cried on my shoulder. I guess she needed the comfort of another woman and mother. I just can't imagine losing a child that way, in any way for that matter."

"Hey Mom, remember this morning when that doctor got up and spoke? Well, I couldn't figure out what he was talking about through all of his crying. What was his deal?"

"Oh, well, that was Dr. Collins, Anna's pediatrician. Anna had been taking some sort of medicine for her asthma but then she got bronchitis so Dr. Collins prescribed some pills for that. They think Anna had some kind of allergic reaction to the combination of the pills but Mrs. Andrews was telling me today at the reception after the service that they didn't allow an autopsy. I don't blame them. But anyway, apparently Dr. Collins feels partly responsible for Anna's death so he felt he should get up and say something. I feel bad for him. There's no way he could have known what would happen."

Jenna's mother took another sip of her tea, took a deep breath and said, "So you never answered my question."

"What question?"

"What did you think today?"

"Oh, I don't know. It was sad I guess."

"That's all you have to say? 'It was sad I guess'. Sweetie, sometimes I just don't understand you. You and Anna Beth played together all the time as little girls and you haven't expressed the least bit of sorrow about all of this."

"That was a long time ago Mom. Anna and I haven't spoken since sixth grade."

"I don't understand that either. You two used to get along so well as kids. In fact you reminded me of Mrs. Andrews and myself at that age."

"Whatever Mom. I'm going to get started on my homework."

"All right, but before you go I have a job for you."

"What is it?" Jenna asked wearily.

"When I was talking to Mrs. Andrews this afternoon she said she wants to clean and arrange Anna's room to preserve it but honey, I don't think she's up for it yet. She says if she doesn't do it right away she'll never do it. She's being so brave. She mentioned something about hiring a cleaning service but that's just so impersonal and you never know what they might break or misplace. Anyway, I thought it would be nice if you went over and helped out so I told her you would."

Jenna slowly turned her widening eyes to face her mother and exclaimed, "Mom! What did you do that for?!"

"Honestly Jenna, don't be so selfish! Mrs. Andrews needs someone there with her and you never have anything to do after school, so I thought you might like to do something nice for her."

"But Mom, me going over there would be no different than a cleaning service. It wouldn't be any less impersonal."

"Of course it would. You and Anna were such good friends and Mrs. Andrews thinks so highly of you."

Jenna's face reddened and through the knot in her throat managed to reply, "Mom, why do you keep saying that? Anna and I were never friends. I never liked going over to her house and I never liked playing with her!"

"Jenna, what are you talking about? You always admired Anna. I think you just don't know how to deal with her death and that's why you're saying these things. But Mrs. Andrews really needs your help."

Emily Randow
209 Rosewood Ave.
Catonsville, MD 21228

Let's Just Dance

If dancing were falling
We would all be full of grace;
But would that grace be from God
Or from the inner most soul that glissades it's way into the movement-
Clumsily, almost faltering onto the dance floor
Not in sync with the music nor with the body for that matter?
And the feet and the arms flail around like a newborn colt whose unsteady limbs buckle and bend under the weight.

But if falling were dancing
What would happen then?
Would the steps lead the legs
And the rest of the body follow gracefully,
Like a fish born into the water to swim
With fins and scales
All in one smooth movement?
If this were so-
Would God accept us without cause
Without our faltering?
Or to enter the eternal dance
Do we first have to fall
Fall onto the floor and try to stand again and again without success
Until finally He says
"Enough!"
And the music slows and we just glide along

Rude Awakening

You can't help but be amazed as the shadows stretch across your face.
The rumbling and the churning just kind of makes you feel displaced.
Walking on earth that bends under the weight of your shame.
You wait, wander, and drift to find it . . . but it doesn't have a name.

So you just pass the people, slip through their fingers, fall to the ground like sand.
In a strange and whirling, terrifying, dark, and endless land.
You can't help but be a rock in a river of relentless life.
You just get in the way, get out, don't stay, and find something to survive.

So say a little prayer for me while I criticize your fame.
You're the sun, the moon, the stars, and you knew when to stake your claim.
Please stop the pain and burning flame that swirls within your soul.
'Cause next to you, it's sad but true, I'm an empty hole.

I've lived a little while and I'm tired of the game.
I see through you, and you can too . . . everything's the same.
So, tell me, "Are you happy with your home, your kids, your wife?"
You look so quaint, so perfect, but you're really not alive.

I've heard we all get one cup, is it true that you got two?
The dealer's bribed, I don't subscribe to that kind of bitter truth.
I need a little reality, I sure hope it isn't yours.
The bets were laid, and you've been paid, now I'm walking out the door.

You've lived on hopes, in dreams, and were supported by thin air.
But time is up, face the fact, no one knows you're there.

So you just pass the people, slip through their fingers, fall to the ground like sand.
In a strange and whirling, terrifying, dark, and endless land.
You can't help but be a rock in a river of relentless life.
You just get in the way, get out, don't stay, and find something to survive.

Find something to survive.
We all need something to survive.

William Smiley

Before and After

All lined up perfectly
Like a little boy playing with his toy soldiers
This is the real game
No jokes
Backpacks and guns
For every man
Marching left and right
Through mud and grass
The drummer boy calls in the troops from both sides
The smell of death and blood
Are in their heads
There is no turning back
The killing machines pointed at each other
ONE, TWO, THREE
BANG! BANG! BANG!
A few remain
But only wish they didn't
The next day they do the same
And the day after
Until someone says that's enough
But till then
It's blood and death everyday
For the soldiers lined up in a perfect line

Michael Stienss

"FROM THE FIRE. . ."

(excerpt)

Lea Svendsen

Though the searing pain had long since faded from her scarred throat, Fox winced as she cried out in misery. Six months had gone since that battle, that hideous fire attack, but the raspy voice that passed through her lips still frightened her. Her chest tightened, making it difficult to draw a breath as she cowered before the red blaze before her eyes. Again, she saw the glowing torches, the hungry flames stretching out to kiss her pale skin. Again, she huddled on the cold ground, wailing like a banshee as one by one they dropped their blazing branches onto her. Again, the darkness overwhelmed her as the glassy stars faded from her sight.

"Scriv!" And the moment passed, Death fluttered by, passing her over once more. Then she was on her feet again, marching down a deserted city street. The still night air was hot, thick and tinged with the bitter scent of mildew, as if the city itself had fallen to decay while she'd rested in the mountains. Fox moaned, cursing herself silently for her weakness. How could she hope to handle the stress of battle if she still succumbed to these hideous flashbacks? She'd ample time to heal, to build up her strength again, to fight her newfound fear of fire. Six months on leave from duty, and the Agency had suffered dearly without the sharp bite of her blade defending her ideals. The other Dukes needed her, couldn't fight without her chilling battle cry, her shouts of victory. But her ruined voice served as a bitter reminder of that night when she had been screaming out not from triumph, but from horror. They had tried to kill her, and the pronounced rasp in her voice ignited images of the blaze, of the pain, of the defeat.

The air grew heavy as she wandered through the stuffy alleyways, so thick it possessed a dream-like quality in its oppression. It seemed as if the atmosphere was attempting to restrain the Duke, to keep her from approaching a fate darker than the sky above. Perhaps some unknown specter sought to prevent her from learning something that would be better off unknown, meeting one who should remain a stranger. . .

In a half-hearted attempt to distract her weary mind from such morbid thoughts, she allowed her thoughts to wander and settle on a memory forgotten long ago. As she passed by a vintage boutique, windows barred and the doors locked tight for the night, she became mesmerized by the faint whiff of sandalwood and musk that drifted along the shadows around the faded brick building. "Scriv. . ." she whispered. An image of the red-haired warrior boy she'd once loved came to mind as she paused to savor the familiar scent. It was this forgotten Duke that toyed with her mind as she kept an alert eye out for any Scorpion snipers along the road. She concentrated on recalling every detail about him she could–the playful way his spiky red hair would fall into his dark green eyes, his smooth, sweet, almost shy smile. What she didn't allow herself to remember was how petty he was, how arrogant those emerald eyes were as they judged every girl they saw. She forgot how he'd rejected her time and again because she was a year or so younger than the other

girls, a shy insecure child who wasn't worth being seen with. Granted, when she was fourteen, there were four years between them, but he never bothered to even acknowledge her in the halls of Sylore—just a little smile would have been enough. As she marched boldly through inky shadows, she wondered if he was still among the living, or if he had become one of Ryo's underworld disciples. She moaned again, mourning the mysterious loss of one of the Agency's finest Dukes, her idol Scriv.

Anxiety seized her as she saw a small movement at the corner of the sidewalk just ahead, and she crouched defensively as the phantom revealed itself to be a thoughtlessly discarded scrap of newspaper. *Come on, come on, come on. . . they need you. . . you can handle this, by Kyta's grace, you will not be defeated again. . . come on, come on. . .* Her brain pounded with the steady tempo to keep her going through the alleys of the sleeping city. She couldn't afford to disappoint Flash and the others, not on this night. With a feeble sense of determined courage, she forced her way through the resilient black shadows on the street before her.

The silence she crept through was rudely disturbed as the echo of heavy footsteps lumbered toward her from behind. Taking a deep breath, she discreetly quickened her pace while keeping her eyes focused on a shadow in a window across the street. As the sound grew louder, coming up closer, her left hand moved instinctively to the hilt of the sword hanging from her right hip. With one adept gesture, she pivoted on her heel with her sword drawn to face the creature who stalked her.

"Whoa, Fox! Relax," gasped a familiar voice. Flash held his gloved hands up in front of him, surrendering to Fox's paranoia. Spiked brown hair fell over his hazel eyes, heavy with humidity, as he dropped back into a slow walk. The soft leather of his coat squeaked softly as he reached up to push the hair from his face.

Fox looked away, tried to hide behind the array of dagger-like spikes her own hair was shaped in, styled like her partner's and all the other Dukes. Prepared for battle, the two were similarly clad, him in a biker's coat and black cotton pants, a simple black shirt and boots, her in leather pants and a Dark Star tee shirt beneath her long leather coat. The soft gleam of a hand gun shone from his hip, while the girl's dagger was less discreet, its polished hilt glittering menacingly from the folded-over top of her tall boots. Armed with guns and swords clipped to the broad belts circling their waists, they were ready to fight, and for Dukes, death was not an option.

The girl exhaled slowly and sheathed her sword, mumbling a sort of apology in the long breath that whistled through her glossy black lips. She hastily turned her back to Flash and continued on her way. The others were waiting, and she wanted to meet up with them before the Scorpions made any kind of dramatic appearance.

My Language

My eyes observe
and mind digests,
but the smudging ink
of newspaper print
turns my thoughts
into code
even I can't decipher.
I've been trained by
typewritter keys
whose metal spokes
pinch my tongue
to form archaic letters
into syllables, into words.
I can no longer dance
opaque pigments,
only cry in text.

Let me breathe in wood-grain,
sing in tickles,
laugh in footprints.
Take away my voice
and scripted line;
from now on
I will speak
in landscapes.

Jennifer Strunge

Monica Twork
4526 Brookridge Dr.
Kingsport, TN 37664

Mrs. Steere

Two months after Mrs. Steere died, her front yard was covered by an enormous blue and white striped tent. The grass in her yard disappeared along with a part of her next door neighbor's flowerbed. If Mrs. Steere had been alive to see the people come, she would have said they were like prehistoric dinosaurs surrounded by a china display. They poked and prodded Mrs. Steere's ancient furniture, and wondered how much it would go for today. They opened drawers that hadn't been opened since long before Mrs. Steere's final illness.

In the midst of it, Mrs. Steere's furniture stood on like a Victorian matron in the middle of a disco. They had been in their element inside the dark smoky house, where faded jade green velour blended well with dark corners and ashtrays. Here, exposed to brutal sunlight, all their faults stood out – the fraying lace on the pillow, the faded splotch on the side. It was the first time any of them had been outside since the momentous move into the bungalow, fifty years ago.

Not that any of the browsers would have recognized the furniture even in their original place. Mrs. Steere had never had many visitors. Her house was claustrophobic, cluttered with odds and ends and the overpowering aroma of cigarettes.

Sometime after noon, Mrs. Steere's next door neighbor, Mrs. Landon got tired of seeing strangers park in her driveway and stomp with malicious joy on her pansies. She wandered over to see what all the fuss over May's – Mrs. Steele's – furniture was. She really wasn't planning to buy anything; she had seen enough of May's house to know that she wouldn't pay good money for anything in it. But she had forgotten that an auction was like a treasure hunt. In a few minutes, she was pulling out a box of patterns from the sixties and trying to hide them before the man beside her could get any ideas about putting a bid on them.

Beneath all the patterns was a decaying old turn of the century cigar box, a brand that Mrs. Landon remembered from when she was a girl. She was about to dump the patterns back over it, because she didn't know what use she would find for a cigar box, when she saw in spidery, faded writing simply the word "May." It looked like a remnant of Mrs. Steere's childhood. More out of curiosity than anything else, because she couldn't imagine Mrs. Steere ever as a girl, Mrs. Landon opened it. She half-expected to see a nest of baby mice, or an empty box of cigarettes, but instead there was a rusty handkerchief, embroidered by someone long ago in lace. Underneath that was a peach conch shell, and a postcard with greetings from someone named Sam.

At the very bottom were ancient photographs. One was a family group in 1850s attire, another a woman holding a rose listlessly in her hand. Their utter solemnity amused Mrs. Landon, and she was chuckling to herself when she came across one of May herself. She couldn't have been more than sixteen, dressed in buttons and frills, and rather quite pretty, but something in the glint of her eyes was familiar to Mrs. Landon. It disturbed her, and she wanted to put the box away, but she made herself look at May's old picture until she imagined the eyes were looking at her. They were as alive now as if Mrs. Steere had never died. Mrs. Landon could almost smell cigarette smoke for a moment before she closed the box and left it under the patterns again.

The Glory of Being a Woman
by Barbara Watkins

We suck in our nonexistent guts
We add our lipstick
Our peachy pink blush
Spending hours in the bathroom
Perfectly positioning every piece of hair
Does it make us pretty?
Or does it make us a slave
To their expectations?
I always said I'd give
Anything for him to like me
But I never imagined
He'd take me up on the offer
I lost control
I lost my life
To a man
With a gut
Who doesn't try to suck it in

Euphoria

KATE WERNER

Eliza was a girl with an extremely low self-esteem. As a young child, she had lived in a broken home. Her father ran off when she was two, leaving her mother a single mom for many years. With three other mouths to feed besides Eliza's, money was tight in the Meier family. Eliza's mother, Sarah, had to work two jobs in order to support herself and four children, and thus there was rarely when the neglected child had a chance to see her mother.

When Eliza nine years old, Sarah met widowed man, who was a Colonel in the Army. After seeing each other for a little less than a year, the couple decided to move a step further into marriage.

It wasn't that Eliza didn't like her stepfather, indeed she was more than gracious to him, and loved him dearly; however, because Paul was a colonel, the family moved around quite a bit. In the beginning, it was exciting. Paul's job took them to places such as Asia, Australia, Europe and all over the United States. By her ninth grade year, when the family finally settled down in a small suburb of Pennsylvania, Eliza was well traveled, but also very much alone. Paul was never stationed in one place for more than a year, never allowing the poor girl to make any sort of true friend. As a result, Eliza lost almost any self-esteem she might have had before, perhaps leading to the horrible incidents that followed in the first few months of the girl's ninth grade year.

Freedom High was not the best of schools in the area. No one would know it by walking through the halls, but the majority of the students were drug addicts. Being near the large city of Philadelphia, many people from the inner city came to the school, bringing their gangs and drugs with them. Many of these inner city kids were in fact drug dealers, and extremely greedy. They would do anything to make money. In order to do this, these inner city kids would pick out naïve underclassmen, develop friendships with them and build up their confidence. When the dealers introduced the poor souls to their deadly products the underclassmen felt obligated to at least try the drug offered to them, guaranteeing the dealer a new customer. Although Eliza did not know, the minute she walked into school, she became the perfect target. Clinging to her books nervously, everyone could tell she was incredibly unsure of herself. Immediately they all knew how easy it would be to get her hooked.

Over the period of the school year, Eliza began to make a lot of what she thought were good friends. People started asking her to go to parties, take trips to the mall, etc. Eliza began to feel a sense of confidence once more, that is until the one fatal party she simply shouldn't have attended.

"Try it," Amber said loudly trying to make herself heard over the music, "It will make you feel much better afterwards."

"I don't know," replied Eliza, with hesitation in her voice, "I've heard that heroin is really dangerous, it can kill you on your first try."

Amber and Eliza were standing just outside the boundaries of the dance floor. Amber, one of the most popular girls in school, had taken Eliza aside to have a chat with her. While they were talking, Amber pulled out a tiny plastic bag from her brown leather purse, and offered it to Eliza.

"Only wimps die on their first try Eliza," retorted Amber, with a bit of impatience in her voice, "and I know you're no wimp!"

Eliza looked hesitantly at the plastic bag. Part of her wanted to say no. She knew what Amber was telling her was a lie, because she'd been studying drugs in health class for quite some time. Nevertheless, Amber was the most popular girl in school. If Eliza refused her, Eliza's social life would be ruined. She had come so far in these past few months and her happiness was almost complete.

With an unsteady hand, Eliza took that bag from Amber's hand and opened it. She looked for guidance. Amber seeing Eliza's questioning eyes took some of the white powder out of the bag, and placed it in Eliza's hand, indicating the Eliza should hold the drug up to her nose. Amber instructed the girl on how to snort heroin through her nose. In a few minutes, the poor girl was no longer tense. She felt a wonderful sensation of happiness, and a euphoria that could not be described. However, within a few minutes Eliza felt a terrible pain, which triggered every part of her body. Her last memory was falling to the floor, and after that, everything became dark.

Eliza found herself lying on a pile of garbage. Dozens of pieces of white paper were covering the girl. As she brushed them away, she noticed that on one paper there was written the word "depression." She picked up another sheet on which was written "low self-esteem," another saying "loneliness," and yet another which said "addict." Eliza realized this garbage heap was telling the story of her life. As she was contemplating this an old man with a long white beard, and kind gentle eyes approached the dump, carrying a large plastic bag. Without say a word; he began putting the papers in the trash bag. Curiously, Eliza watched him, wondering what he was going to do with them.

Once the tired man had gathered up all the papers, he left. Eliza began following behind him. After a few minutes, the pair reached the man's destination, a huge roaring fire. Realizing that the man was going to burn the papers, Eliza quickly ran to catch up with him. She tried to grab the bag away from the man, but surprisingly his strength was greater than her own. As he emptied the bag, one paper escaped its fate. Eliza caught it, hugging it close to her. The old man, having emptied the bag, turned around to face Eliza, reaching out his hand to her, as if knowing she was keeping one last paper. Eliza shook her head aggressively, not wanting to depart with the paper that said "proud." It was as though without it she would feel naked. However, the man was as determined as Eliza was. He continued to hold out his hand, his eyes pleading with her in a way so meaningful she could not resist. Unsure of herself, the girl handed the last paper to the man. He smiled, and came closer to her, kissing her on the forehead. As he did, Eliza felt a warm spark run through her body. All of a sudden, she felt happy and joyful. She was so taken by this sudden euphoria, that she did not notice the old man step into the fire until it was too late. She called to him but the man was gone. The fire died down immediately, and Eliza searched the ashes for remains of the man, but she found

none. She let out a cry, looking into the sky as though there was an answer above. What she saw was more incredible than anything she knew she had ever seen. A bright beam shone in the sky, standing separate from all the stars in the heavens. It neared closer and closer to her, and as Eliza continued to gaze at this magnificent sight, the bright light seemed to take the shape of the old man. She reached out her hand to touch the glowing image, and as she did, the light disappeared, and Eliza awoke, finding herself lying in a hospital bed, hooked to more machines than she could count.

For the first time in awhile, Eliza smiled. All of the sudden she felt a special warmth- the kind one might feel while wrapped in warm blanket by a blazing fire, while outside a thick snow covered the ground. She felt safe, and for some particular reason Eliza knew that her life would never be the same. She was no longer alone, for she now realized that up above, there was a heavenly being watching over her. Suddenly she was filled with ideas of how she would share her newfound knowledge with the rest of the world, but she was tired. She closed her eyes, and drifted into a peaceful sleep. Tomorrow, tomorrow she would change the world. But now she must sleep.

Megan Wheeler
216-17-2567

"An Ode To Raindrops"

God
gave me a
gift
of silver
raindrops
from
heaven
falling on
my body
my hands
and feet
drenched in
surreal
happiness
like stars in
twilight
falling
from the
sky
golden smiles in
the form of
dewdrops
rinse my
face
clean of
envy
and sadness
each drop an
ice cream cone
bringing
giggles of pleasure
to the
child
locked in my
soul
laughter
in the form of
tears
from heaven
every silver
fragment of a
broken mirror like
an angel
splashing on the
world around
me
cooling the
burning furnace
of my emotions
crashing to
the
earth with
forceful
delicacy
watching
them
watching
me
racing like
wild horses
down the
window
of my
brain.

leslie white
10 Lakeway ct
New Orleans, LA 70131

ms

"It's better to be lucky than good,"
my brother always tells me, and I laugh.
I always did for love.

He sits there, trying to lounge
on the blood-red couch. Hiding his fear
behind a shield of wit, his words
insubstantial. Meaningless thoughts drift
slowly away, his voice catching
in the wind.

The room reflects his new stage in life,
tall bookcases filled with Anne Rice
and Shakespeare, CDs cased
and alphabetized, black and white photos,
little, white papers crumpled to their deaths
overflow the trash can.
My eyes slide over the room only noticing
his lips, as if they hold
the words of God.

His eyes tear; snowflakes floating gently
to the floor, every one different.
Goose bumps make hills covering
his arms. Creations from under the child's
bed hunt his head to display on a pike.
I am a lioness. In his eyes
I see a swell of blue bravery,
piecing together his fear.
But where are the monsters?
And then he tells me.

My face is ice, but inside me a flaming wail cries out
damning Multiple Sclerosis
a horrible sound. It shakes the body
into obedience, casting its shadow
on the sun.
He looks no different, only my reflection
is altered. I turn back
and hear him say, for once serious,
cowardly of heaven,
"It's best to be both lucky and good."

Samson Jones
P.O. Box 571
H.F., W.V. 25425

The unfortunate truth about our society is that racism still exists, it has just been pushed into the darker and more secluded recesses of our collective minds. Why do I have such a gloomy view of most people? It all has to do with a recent conversation I had while visiting my grandparents.

There is an older woman (who, for the sake of politeness, shall remain nameless) living near my grandparents. She lives alone and has no nearby family, so we often walk to her house and chat with her for a while. She is easily one of the nicest people I have ever met and I am quite fond of her. For these reasons, I was very surprised by an offhand comment she made during our latest chat.

She is getting older now, and the first signs of Alzheimer's Disease are beginning to show. Because of this, some of her tact has been stripped away. She mentioned casually that she wanted to go to Hawaii to vacation, but she probably never would because there are too many Jews living there now. My jaw dropped. Nobody said anything, because she is getting so old now, but the incident has bothered me for quite some time.

Our society has taken racism out of our conscious minds and pushed it deep into our subconscious where it now festers. Nobody says they're racist nowadays, but how many people, when their politeness has been destroyed by something like Alzheimer's, would casually make a few deeply racist comments?

This is why my heart sinks when I hear someone at school making a racist joke. Sure, its all done in fun, but that sort of thing tends to stick with you. This is the sort of thing we need to stamp out. We've succeeded in no longer acting like racists, we now need to stopping thinking like racists.

BRIGHT EYES

Kara Flanigan

Setting my eyes on Rose for the very
first time was like rushing down the
stairs to find the Christmas tree enveloped
by a wonder of wrapping paper.

Arriving at the pound on that April morning
aroused many feelings inside my "soon-to-be-a-
dog-owner" self,
Following the shadow in front of me as I walked
to our destiny, I could not help but stop to peer through
the animal dungeons.

Thousands of lonesome eyes glared at me as
if to say "I'm in this wretched place now, and I'll
forever be in this wretched place."
It seemed as though this isle of desolation was never-ending,
and I would continuously be faced with a plea for refuge.

Finally, I halted in front of a wire cage as a gate was being opened.
Slowly and cautiously creeping in was a dark colored mutt
called by the name "Rose."

In the days following, this four-legged creature,
was scared and timid like a child wounded from
oppression and cruelty.

I was unconvinced whether this "man's" best friend
would remain an infinite place in my heart or fade
away like a puff of smoke.

An exchange of trust and faith,
lying by my feet
rolling in the leaves
sleeping on my bed - a secret from Mom
silently conversing with me about life
constantly a double shadow
soon ripened like a
juicy watermelon

Time passes quickly, almost unnoticed

Just like a pen on paper or music and a piano,
we are never complete without the other.

Bright Eyes and me

William Kennedy

". . . serious fiction, especially novelistic work, has time as its essence and memory as its principal tool."

— William Kennedy, from The Hopwood Lecture

Bernie A. Degnan

Sports reporting at the Glens Falls Post Star

For some 40 years, William Kennedy has crafted history and memory into a body of literature that is as remarkable for its variety as it is for erecting an Albany of the imagination. "What James Joyce did for Dublin and Saul Bellow did for Chicago, William Kennedy has done for Albany, New York.... His cycle of Albany novels is one of the great resurrections of place in our literature," asserted James Atlas in *Vogue*. In Kennedy's highly regarded "Albany Cycle," outcasts and machine politicians, lowlifes and swells populate an imagined Albany as real as any city of bricks. Thanks to Kennedy, Albany occupies a privileged place on America's mythic map as a capital of the national memory, and a metropolis of everyday struggles.

Born in 1928 in Albany's North End, Kennedy attended Public School 20, the Christian Brothers Academy, and Siena College prior to pursuing a career in journalism. He joined the *Post Star* in Glens Falls as a sports reporter and, after

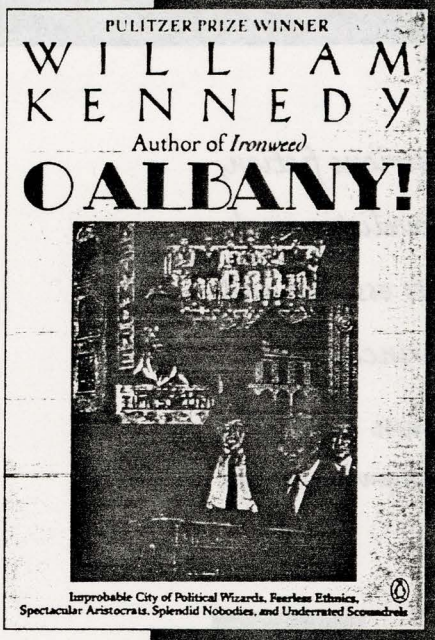
Ken Spencer

Kennedy at the Empire State Plaza in Albany in 1983

being drafted in 1950, worked for an army newspaper in Europe. Upon his discharge he joined the Albany *Times-Union*. In 1956 he accepted a job with a newpaper in Puerto Rico, where he met and would soon marry Daisy (Dana) Sosa, an actress and dancer. (The Kennedy's have three children—Dana, Katherine and Brendan.) Kennedy became managing editor of the fledgling *San Juan Star* in 1959, only to quit two years later to pursue writing fiction full-time.

In San Juan, Kennedy took a course with novelist Saul Bellow, who said of Kennedy's early work, "He could take material from skid row and write about these people as [if they were as] fully human as anyone else. The people he wrote about didn't know they had become pariahs. He wrote about them from the inside.... I was moved by the characters, by their naive but human frailties."

Kennedy had expected to find inspiration for his fiction in Puerto Rico, but discovered that Albany held a stronger claim on his imagination. He returned to Albany in 1963 and wrote a series of articles about the city that earned him a nomination for the Pulitzer Prize and provided the basis for a nonfiction book, ***O Albany!*** (1983). Matthew Parrish, writing in *The Los Angeles Times Book Review,* called ***O Albany!*** "a book distinguished by intellectual depth and a vibrant prose style ... a rich feast that bubbles with the humor, nobility and pathos of the men and women who lived, worked and played in New York's capital city from the 17th Century to the present."


PULITZER PRIZE WINNER
WILLIAM KENNEDY
Author of *Ironweed*
O ALBANY!
Improbable City of Political Wizards, Fearless Ethnics, Spectacular Aristocrats, Splendid Nobodies, and Underrated Scoundrels

"Back in the early 1890s, so the story goes, an imaginative landlord named Lackey Doherty advertised a house with running water for rent on Swan Street. What made this unusual was that the house was not a very grand house and the Swan Street neighborhood was not very grand, either. It was Martinville, a notorious Irish shantytown.

"So it was with great interest that people trooped over to the Doherty place to see the running water. True to his word, Lackey took the visitors downstairs and showed them the water—the Beaverkill Creek running underneath the house. And there was more than water in the creek. There were geese.

"Lackey Doherty lives on in the anecdote, but the geese and the shantytown and even the water have gone. In their place came Beaver Park, now Lincoln Park, an incalculable improvement to the city. The Beaverkill, too, is gone—underground—and lives only in history books, or in memoirs like those of Henry James, whose grandfather founded the remarkable James clan in the Beaverkill's purlieu. Henry, in A Small Boy and Others, *the first volume of his autobiography, speaks of a relative who visits the Jameses in Manhattan, having come from 'the far-off Beaverkill,' and he says the man 'definitely emerged from rustication—the Beaverkill had but for a certain term protected or promoted, his simplicity.'"*

— from "Delaware Avenue and the Old South End: Shanties, Mansions, and Murder" in O Albany!

William Kennedy

Nationality: American

Genre(s): Novels; Short Stories; Screenplays

Award(s):

Award for reporting, Puerto Rican Civic Association (Miami, FL), 1957; Page One Award, Newspaper Guild, 1965, for reporting;

* Times-Union won the New York State Publishers Award for Community Service, 1965, on the basis of several of Kennedy's articles on Albany's slums; NAACP award, 1965, for reporting; Writer of the Year Award, Friends of the Albany Public Library, 1975; National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, 1981; MacArthur Foundation fellowship, 1983; National Book Critics Circle Award, 1983, and Pulitzer Prize for fiction, 1984, both for Ironweed; New York State Governor's Arts Award, 1984; honored by the citizens of Albany and the State University of New York at Albany with a "William Kennedy's Albany" celebration, September 6-9, 1984; Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award, 1985, for O Albany!; Brandeis University Creative Arts Award, 1986; L.H.D., Russell Sage College, 1980, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1987, Fordham University, 1992, and Trinity College, 1992; LittD., Siena College, 1984, and College of St. Rose, 1985; Commander, Order of Arts and Letters, France, 1993.

Personal Information: Family: Born January 16, 1928, Albany, NY; son of William J. (a deputy sheriff) and Mary Elizabeth (a secretary; maiden name, MacDonald) Kennedy; married Ana Daisy (Dana) Sosa (a former actress and dancer), January 31, 1957; children: Dana Elizabeth, Katherine Anne, Brendan Christopher. Education: Siena College, B.A., 1949. Military/Wartime Service: U.S. Army, 1950-52; served as sports editor and columnist for Army newspapers; became sergeant. Memberships: Writers' Guild of America, PEN, American Academy of Arts and Letters. Addresses: Home: R.D. 3, Box 508, Averill Park, NY 12018. Office: Department of English, State University of New York at Albany, 1400 Washington Ave., Albany, NY 12222; NYS Writers Institute, Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222-0001.

Agent: Liz Darhansoff, 1220 Park Ave., New York, NY 10028.

Career: Post Star, Glen Falls, NY, assistant sports editor and columnist, 1949-50;
* Times- Union, Albany, NY, reporter, 1952-56;
* Puerto Rico World Journal, San Juan, assistant managing editor and columnist, 1956; Miami Herald, Miami, FL, reporter, 1957; correspondent for Time-Life publications in Puerto Rico, and reporter for Dorvillier (business) newsletter and Knight Newspapers, 1957-59;
* Star, San Juan, Puerto Rico, founding managing editor, 1959-61; full-time fiction writer, 1961-63;
* Times-Union, Albany, special writer, 1963-70, and film critic, 1968-70; book editor of Look magazine, 1971; State University of New York at Albany, lecturer, 1974- 82, New York State Writers Institute, founder and professor of English, 1983--. Writers Institute at Albany, founder, 1983, director, 1984--. Visiting professor of English, Cornell University, 1982-83. Co-founder, Cinema 750 film society, Rennselaer, NY, 1968-70; organizing moderator for series of forums on the humanities, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, New York State Library, and Albany Public Library. Panelist, New York State Council on the Arts, 1980-83. American Academy of Arts and Letters, member, beginning in 1993.

WRITINGS BY THE AUTHOR:

* The Ink Truck (novel), Dial (New York City), 1969.

* Legs (novel), Coward, 1975.

* Billy Phelan's Greatest Game (novel), Viking (New York City), 1978.

* Getting It All, Saving It All: Some Notes by an Extremist, New York State Governor's Conference on Libraries, 1978.

* (Contributor) Gabriel Garcia Marquez (criticism), Taurus Ediciones, 1982.

* Ironweed (novel), Viking, 1983.

* O Albany!: An Urban Tapestry (nonfiction), Viking, 1983, published as O Albany! Improbable City of Political

Wizards, Fearless Ethics, Spectacular Aristocrats, Splendid Nobodies, and Underrated Scoundrels, Penguin, 1985.

* (Contributor of essay) The Capitol in Albany (photographs), Aperture, 1985.

* (With son, Brendan Kennedy) Charley Malarkey and the Belly Button Machine (juvenile), Atlantic Monthly Press (New York City), 1986.

* (With Francis Coppola and Mario Puzo) The Cotton Club, St. Martin's Press, 1986.

* (Author of introduction) The Making of Ironweed, Penguin Books, 1988.

* Quinn's Book, Viking, 1988.

* Very Old Bones, Viking, 1992.

* Riding the Yellow Trolley Car: Selected Nonfiction, Viking, 1994.

* (With B. Kennedy) Charlie Malarkey and the Singing Moose (juvenile), Viking, 1994.

* The Flaming Corsage (novel), Viking, 1996.

* The Albany Trilogy (contains Legs, Billy Phelan's Greatest Game, and Ironweed), Penguin Books, 1996.

* (With Mary Lynch Kennedy and Hadley M. Smith) Writing in the Disciplines: A Reader for Writers, Prentice Hall, 1996.

* Conversations with William Kennedy, edited by Neila C. Seshachari, University Press of Mississippi (Jackson, MS), 1997.

SCREENPLAYS

* (With Francis Ford Coppola) The Cotton Club, Orion Pictures Corporation, 1984.

* Ironweed, Tri-Star Pictures, 1987.

Also author of screenplay Legs for Gene Kirkwood and Billy Phelan's Greatest Game for Pepper- Prince Company.

OTHER

Contributor of articles, interviews, and reviews to periodicals, including New York Times Magazine, National Observer, New York Times Book Review, Washington Post Book World, New Republic, and Look.

Media Adaptations:Ironweed became an Orion release in 1988. Film rights to Legs have been sold to Gene Kirkwood; film rights to Billy Phelan's Greatest Game have been sold to Richard Sylbert and Jerry Wexler.

William Kennedy, author of RIDING THE YELLOW TROLLEY CAR,
Viking, April 30, 1993, $25.00 and VERY OLD BONES,
Penguin, April 13, 1993, $10.00.
(c) Mariana Cook

The Writers

Serena Ahne
Justin Armetta
Lea Svendsen
Derek Bayne
Kristin Beane
Joseph Brooks
Eliot Caroom
Margaret Chadbourn
Colleen Costello
Andrew Cowles
Lou DiBenedetto
Jared Eastlack
Stephanie Gerhold
Emily Getman
Jennifer Gordon
Courtney Hanson
Erin Hess
Kristen Hicks
David Huzzard
Jonathan Illuzzi
Greta Jee
Ryan Jesien
Katie Klimas
Jaime Lange

Michael Levien
Kristina Lohmeyer
Kristen Louk
Lara Maraziti
Danielle Mathers
Kelli Moore
Julia Myers
Jessica Jacob
Robert Perkins
Jennifer Pipino
Kate Prisby
Daniel Prud'homme
Gina Ralston
Emily Randow
William Smiley
Michael Stienss
Jennifer Strunge
Monica Twork
Barbara Watkins
Kate Werner
Megan Wheeler
Leslie White
Cameron Wilkin
William Jensen

Kara Flanigan

"The only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel, without incurring the the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting."

--Henry James

"Plot may seem to be a matter of choice. It is not. The particular plot is something the novelist is driven to: it is what is left after the whittling-away of alternatives."

--Elizabeth Bowen

"What is poetry? The suggestion, by the imagination, of noble grounds for noble emotions."

--John Ruskin